

Pressklipp om Afghanistan

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Årgång 11



PRESSKLIPP OM AFGHANISTAN

* är ett samarbetsprojekt mellan Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) och Afghanistankomiteen i Norge (AiN). * utges varannan månad som en nyhetsservice för SAKs och AiNs medlemmar, lokalkommittéer och styrelser. * detta nummer är sammanställt och redigerat av Börje Almqvist och Peter Hjukström. * pressklipp till kommande nummer mottages tacksamt från läsekretsen till adress: **Svenska Afghanistankommittén, Sturegatan 16, 114 36 STOCKHOLM, SVERIGE** (Märk kuvertet med "Pressklipp"). * prenumerationspriset för 1999 är 250 kronor och inbetalas på pg 64 23 90-9, Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Notera på inbetalningskortet att betalningen avser prenumeration på "Pressklipp".

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Haremsdamen

"Haremsdamen" fick hon heta i folkmun. Men trots det skämtsamma tillmälet var det få som visste något om Aurora Nilssons bakgrund. Här i Södertälje var hon mest känd som hockeylegenden Calle Abers hustru. Hennes självbiografiska bok "Flykten från harem", som kom ut 1928, föll ganska snart i glömska. Nu aktualiserar Svenska Afghanistankommittén Aurora Nilssons livsöde genom att ge ut boken i nyutgåva.

Det är som hämtat ur en sagobok. Svenska Aurora Nilsson gifte sig med sin drömprins och flyttade med honom till Afghanistan. Men lyckan blev kort. Bara ett år efter ankomsten flydde hon landet – en händelse som i sin förlängning kan ha påverkat hela Afghanistans historia.

AV SARA ULLBERG

Nästan varje morgon tog hon sig en promenad utanför syateljén på Dalgatan. En parant kortvuxen dam, kraftigt sminkad, ofta klädd i turban.

– Det var något visst med henne. Hon var en färgstark kvinna på många sätt, minns antikvarie Gö-

ran Gelotte. Men på den tiden visste man ju inte mer om henne än att hon var Calle Abers fru.

Känd för sin man

Nej, Aurora Nilsson gjorde inte mycket väsen av sin spännande bakgrund. Här i Södertälje var hon känd som hockeylegenden Carl Abrahamssons hustru. En kvinna som engagerat följde SSK:s matcher från läktaren, ivrigt hojtande och hejande på det egna laget.

– Det var en del som kallade henne för Haremsdamen, berättar förre hockeyspelaren Gösta "Käppen" Karlsson. Fast aldrig så hon hörde det. De undrade var Calle Aber fått tag på en så snygg tjej.

Öknamnet hade sin för-

klaring. Aurora Nilsson hade verkligen varit en sorts haremsdam. Den 4 mars 1928 flydde hon från ett olyckligt äktenskap, bort från förste maken Asim Khans hemland Afghanistan – bort från harem. Händelserna skildrade hon samma år i boken "Flykten från Harem".

Det är denna bok som Svenska Afghanistankommittén nu uppmärksammat med en återutgivning.

"Torr öken"

Äterigen kan den som vill ta del av Aurora Nilssons livfulla ögonvittnesskildringar av livet i Afghanistan under 1920-talet. Som en av få västerlänningar – kanske den första svenskan – fick hon en djup inblick i det vardagliga

afghanska livet.

Att mötet med Afghanistan inte blev någon positiv upplevelse genomsyrar hela Aurora Nilssons bok. Kulturkrock är bara förnamnet, det märker man redan i inledningen.

"Jag hade väntat mig ett vackert om också enligt vanlig europeisk måttstock efterblivet land."

Det jag fick se var en torr öken!

Under två dagar sågo vi icke ett träd, icke en grästuva – endast berg, sten och sand. Mellan klipporna kanske någon gång en smal rännil – en "flod".

Ett tröstlöst land... Afghanistan...!"

Flyttade till Berlin

Bakgrunden till historien är romantisk värre. I början

Koa

Afghanistan, biståndet och talibanerna. Utmaningar inför 2000-talet. Red. av Anders Davidson och Peter Hjukström. Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Övers. fr. eng. av Charlotte Hjukström. Orig:s titel: Afghanistan, aid and the Taliban. 89 s. Ill.

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Idag dväljs de övriga av världens katastrofer i skuggan av händelserna i Kosovo. Förståeligt, men vi får inte glömma t.ex. Afghanistan som efter 20 år av krig och miljoner i landsflykt nu hemsökes av de (här vågar vi använda ordet) fanatiska talibanernas regim. Denna bok är en sammanställning av tal från en konferens om Afghanistan i Stockholm i februari 1999. Samtliga författare har mångårig erfarenhet av landet. Anthony Haynes beskriver utländska intressen som är involverade i Afghanistan, t.ex. Ryssland som militärt stöder anti-talibanerna. Oliver Ray behandlar talibanernas ideologiska bakgrund i moskéskolorna och deras sociala bakgrund i stamsamhällena på landsbygden. Den kända antropologen Nancy Hatch Dupree pekar på paradoxer i deras idéer som utmanar konservativa islamiska värderingar. Anders Fänge gör en genomgång och analys av biståndet till Afghanistan. Detta är en mycket givande publikation som ger en rad infallsvinklar och en nyanserad och synnerligen initierad bild av läget i landet. – Håkan Grissler.

på Daigatan



ORIGINALET. Så här såg Aurora Nilssons bok ut när Bonniers gav ut den 1928. Nu har Svenska Afghanistankommittén återutgett boken om svenskans våldiga äventyr i Afghanistan.

av 1920-talet flyttade levnads-glada svenskan Aurora Nilsson till nöjesmetropolen Berlin. Det var där, på cabaretstaurungen Mosa Singh, hon träffade den unge afghanske stu-

denten Asim Khan. Sammensögde Asim var son till en tidigare afghansk minster och ut-sänd till Tyskland för att få en modern utbildning. Ljv musik uppspodd mellan de båda och 1925 gifte de sig.

I Berlin var allt frid och fröjd mellan det exotiska paret. Asim Khan verkade öppen och frigod, precis som sin emanciperade fru. Men allt blev annorlunda när han tvåveckor kallades till Afghanistan av landets regering.

Blev besviken

Aurora, som bytt namn till Rora Asim Khan, följde motsträvt med sin make till hans hemland. Där blev hon djupt besviken över att märka att Asim Khans hus inte var något orientaliskt palats, utan ett enkelt lerhus. Med illa dold avsmak noterar hon i sin bok be-folkningens vanor: att äta udd händerna, att inte tvätta sig så ofta, att rapa uppskattande ef-fekter maten.

Men vad värre var: maken började snabbt ändra person-lighet. Den västerländska ynn fick ge vika för afghanska sedet och bruk – och en inte särskilt afghansk våldsamhet. Aurora förväntades bete sig som en orientalisk kvinna, leva ett ly-bakom stängda dörrar i kvin-nohuset – harem.

"Man hade sagt mig, att min tvillingbror enligt landets sed skul-le frisa under alla dagar."

Och under var och en av dessa dagar måste jag ensam sitta ned-luckad bland kvinnorna på ma-dasserna – stum, utan att kunna äta under de andras smuckningar och grymtningar".

Gjorde revolt

Aurora led och revoltade. Men det var inte bara hon som för illa av vistelsen i Afghani-stan. Maken Asim Khan blev mer eller mindre utsatt av aristokratin i landet. Han hade gift ner sig med en "tyska"

som inte ens ville konvertera till islam. Därför fick han inte de höga poster som annars na-turligt hade tillkommit en man av hans klass och bild-nings. Besvikelsen och vreden tog han ut på sin hustru.

Till slut fick Aurora nog. Hon lämnade sin make, skötte stöd och skydd hos den tyska legationen och den afghanska

kungafamiljen och kunde slutligen den 4 mars 1928 fly ut ur Af-ghanistan.

Väl tillbaka i Berlin led Aurora Nilsson förmodligen brist på pengar. Hon bestämde sig för att sälja sin otroliga be-rättelse och skrev själv – eller med hjälp av någon bekant – boken "Flykten från Harem". Boken skrevs på tyska och var förmodligen inte tänkt att publiceras i Sverige. Ge-nom en vidareförläggning av rådgivarna hamnade dock manuset hos Bonniers som samma år gav ut boken på svenska.

Aurora berättelse är oer-önt för subjektiv. Men samtidigt är det en intressant historia som ganska väl skildrar det af-ghanska samhället före 70-är sedan, konstaterar Afghanistan-samkännaren Anders Fors-berg, som nyöversatt Aurora Nilssons bok från tyskan och dessutom skrivit ett långt, initie-rat förord om henne.

– Och frå-gan är om hon inte in-direkt har förändrat den afghanska

historien! Det finns nämligen ett intressant ef-tertempel till Aurora Nilssons flykt från Afgha-nistan. Aurora själv återvände snart hem till Sverige, gifte sig 1930 med Calle Aber och bo-satte sig i Södertälje. Hennes olyckliga och vanäraade make Asim Khan blev däremot kvar i sitt hemland.

I ett anfall av sinnesförvir-ring tog sig Asim Khan 1933 in på den brittiska ambassaden och dödade tre ambassadgäns-steman. Han hängdes senare som terrorist tillsammans med en mängd oppositionella som

antogs ha deltagit i "samman-svinnningen".

De hårda represalierna or-sakade ytterligare ett terrorist-dåd. Sonen till en av de avrät-tade hämnades på belustigfä-taren, kung Nadir Shah, och mördade honom. Kungens ef-terträdare var bara 19 år gam-mal och kunde inte utöva all den makt som ålåg honom.

Det gjorde i för-längningen att pro-pagandiska krafter fick ett ökat in-flytande i Afghanistan, menar An-ders Fors-berg.

Aurora Nilssons vis-telse i Af-ghanistan ut-lotte en serie hän-delser som är väl-digt intres-santa, säger Anders Fors-berg. Man kan bara spekulera i vad som skulle ha hänt om hon inte lämnat sin afghanske man!

MAKEN. Aurora Nilsson förälskade sig i den afghan-ske studenten Asim Khan och gifte sig med honom 1925. När paret flyttade till Afghanistan blev stötningarna mellan dem ohållbara.

Aurora Nilsson själv föt-re-drog att förtiga och glömma sin vistelse i Afghanistan. Hon

talade aldrig självmant om ti-den som Asim Khans hustru. De Södertäljebor som mötte henne på SSK:s likare, eller lat sig upp klänningar i styat-ljen fick aldrig höra hennes märklige his-toria.

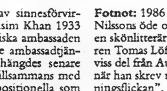
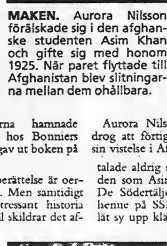
– Nej, det där nämnde hon aldrig något om, sa-ger Gösta "Kappen" Karlsson.

1972 dog Aurora Nilsson, ensam och barnlös. Hennes make Calle Aber hade alltid i en hjärtsatt redan 1948. I lägenheten fanns knapp några spår ef-ter hennes exotiska för-flutta.

Bara några förtvylta vi-sitkort med texten "Rora Asim Khan,

Berlin-Kabul" vittnade om vad denna färgstarka kvinna varit med om.

Fotnot: 1986 blev Aurora Nilssons öde också förevigt i en skönfärdar bok. Författa-ren Tomas Löfdam utgör till viss del från Aurora berättelse när han skrev romanen "Gyn-ningssjukan".



Inger från Östersund

När jag sitter hemma i Östersund och ser på TV, så dör jag lite varje gång jag ser folk dö. Media blöder sällan på de öppningar som finns, att se möjligheter till förändringar. Det säger Inger Andersson von Rosen, i vanliga fall överläkare på Östersunds sjukhus. Just nu är hon vad som kan kallas hälsovärdminister i Afghanistan, ett av världens allra fattigaste länder.

– Afghanistan i dag är inte bara minor och annat elände. Flyktingar återvänder, hus byggs, återlagrarna odlas upp. Livet återvänder och det är guld värt att få vara med om det här.

Hon heter Inger Andersson von Rosen och är tjänstledig från överläkarfunktionen vid infektionskliniken på Östersunds sjukhus.

Hon kallas Inger Anderssons hälsominister. Hon heter Inger Andersson von Rosen och är tjänstledig från överläkarfunktionen vid infektionskliniken på Östersunds sjukhus. Istället har hon en tydlig tjänst som hälsoöverläkare åt Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Med tanke på att kommittén står för mer än hälften av all primärhälsovård på Afghanistans landsväg, så är hälsoministerfunktionen inte så missvisande.

Samtidigt är det kanske mer sant, påpekar Inger, att säga att Inger bör ha den titeln eftersom ändå bara en femtedel av Afghanistans landsvägsbeshälsovård har tillgång till hälsovård.

Inger bor och arbetar mestadels i Peshawar, en stad på den pakistanska sidan gränsen. Här har kommittén sitt huvudkontor.

Men hon reser ofta in i Afghanistan för att besöka kommitténs tre regionala kontor och den direkta verksamheten.

FÖRUTOM INGER är alla andra anställda inom kommitténs hälsoenhet afghaner.

Bland hennes många uppgifter hör att följa upp



Ser glädje. – Det är stort att få vara med och se den kraft, styrka och glädje de afghanska barnmorskorna utstrålar. Berättar en fascinerad Inger Andersson von Rosen från sitt hus i Peshawar i Pakistan.

den står för tre femtedelar: 7711 del är kopplat till värdnadsprogram. Ännu en uppgift är utbildningssträgor inom hälsa och att göra studier, samla in data.

– Vi ska ta fram ett system för hälsoinformation, förklarar Inger, för att få in korrekt statistik, hur många som är sjuka, vad de får för mediciner och så vidare, men också om managementet, med planering och utbildning, hur man gör för att få tillbaka uppgifter till kliniken. Om det finns

verksamheten på de 201 kliniker som finns i Afghanistan. Med mediciner, vårdutbildning av personalen och sjukvård, inklusive moddr- och barnvård.

– Afghanistan har 25 procent dödlighet bland kvinnor i den fertila barnåldern 15-45 år, berättar Inger, som ett exempel på det stora hälsobehovet.

Ett annat hjälpavsnitt är CDAP, ett handlingsprogram, som görs i samarbete med andra organisationer, men får Svenska kommitténs stöd.

– På detta sätt kan vi få tillgång till hälsoinformation, förklarar Inger, för att få in korrekt statistik, hur många som är sjuka, vad de får för mediciner och så vidare, men också om managementet, med planering och utbildning, hur man gör för att få tillbaka uppgifter till kliniken. Om det finns

massor av tuberkulosfall på ett område men inte på ett annat, vad beror det på?

– På det område jobbar vi ihop med FN-organ och två andra hjälporganisationer. Det blir en del av att jobba fram ett system för primärhälsovård i Afghanistan. I gruppen finns också med representanter för det afghanska hälsovärdministeriet och regionala och lokala myndigheter.

Myndigheterna är i de flesta fall sedan 1995 de ökända talibanerna, som inför en extremt konservativ tolkning av islam och seder och moral i landet. Musik är förbjuden.

Barn får inte leka med drakar, man måste ha en viss längd på skägget. Bestämmelser för kvinnor är särskilt restriktiva. I huvudstaden Kabul får kvinnor inte arbeta utanför hemmet och flickor får inte gå i skola. Ändå tycker Inger att hon inte haft speciella problem i de talibanstyrda områdena.

– På vissa ställen har vi fått anpassa klinikkarnas öppettider med särskilda tider för kvinnor, men i stort sett går samarbeteet fricklossfritt.

– Just hälsa är enligt talibanerna undantaget från politik och lokalt så väntar man om sina kläder. Men här inte på något sätt sätt sig emot att vi använder till exempel bilder av kvinnor på våra bilskyltar (som är av 1970).

– Men i norra har situationen alltså varit annorlunda. Kvinnorna har kunnat röra sig fritt, än i områden i södra och östra Afghanistan.

EN ANNAN ANLEDNING till det goda samarbetet är kommitténs stora ackreditering, dess goda rykte.

– Som vi fått bland annat för att vi funnits där så

kallas Afgghanistans hälsovårdsminister

länge och att vi hela tiden funnits inne i landet och inte utanför. Desutom är kommittén så stor. Av 170.000 barn som går i Primary School i Afghanistan, står i dag, går 155.000 i skolor med värat stöd. Där är vi ännu mer dominerande än inom hälsosektorn.

Desutom har vi också ett viktigt program för utsäde av vete som är stapelfödan här.

DET ÄR INTE SVÅRT att få Inger att berätta. Lika snabbt som hon presenterar sina arbetsuppgifter, lika snabbt för hon mig med på berättelser från sina resor inne i Afghanistan.

Med en läkares iver att vara tydlig levandegör hon landets konturer och invånare.

Det är ett fantastiskt land att resa i. Man kommer till platser och undrar hur folk överhuvudtaget kan leva där. Öknar och bergstrakter är vackra att titta på, men de är verkligen oälskvärdiga, svåra att överleva i. Att få träffa dem som bor där är en ofattbar rikedom att bära med sig, från första inträcket av kvinnor med otroligt dekorerade, utsirliga kläder, och oftast med ett leende i ansiktet, trots ofantliga umbäranden.

Och grupperna av kvinnor, dayas, de traditionella barnmorskor, som går på våra kurser, den kraft, styrka och glädje de utstrålar – det är stort att få vara med om.

Jag träffar henne i familjens trevliga hus i stadsdelen University Town i Peshawar. Det är mitt i vintern, men här hänger mogna apelsiner och kryddträdgårdens gröna året runt.

I hostas kom hon hit för en andra period tillsammans med sin make Carl von Rosen som är antropolog och deras nioåriga dotter Petronella. Hon

går i andra klass i Peshawars internationella skola.

Den liksom Svenska Afghanistankommitténs kontor ligger också i University Town.

När jag sitter hemma i Östersund och ser på TV, hör jag lite varje gång jag ser folk dö. Men att finnas på plats i ett av världens allra fattigaste länder, det ger så många dimensioner.

Att se de möjligheter som faktiskt finns till förändringar, de öppningarna bjuder medla så sällan på.

ELÄNDESLISTAN KAN förstås göras hur lång som helst, med världsrekord i mycket; minör, antal flyktingar, spädbarnsdödlighet, ofarbara vägar, tillgång till skolor, rent vatten och så vidare. Men mitt i allt detta, menar Inger, finns människor som vänder och vrider på allt och lyckas sköta det dagliga livet.

Ämnenstone 3 miljoner flyktingar har återvänt till Afghanistan, till svåra förhållanden förvisso, men de är ändå glada att vara hemma. Landet är inte bara ruiner, förklarar Inger. Överallt byggs nya hus upp. Åkerlappar odlas upp igen efter att ha minnits. Djuren blir fler.

Afgghanistan kan också skildras som ett av få länder som styrs traditionsmässigt och där än i dag lösningar söks i konsensus, i enighet.

Många gamla vanor finns kvar samtidigt som nya sociala nätverk byggs upp. Att stötta det här bygget av lokalsamhället är en viktig del. Våra kliniker är en möjlig utgångspunkt för att hjälpa till att skapa en ny bykänsla.

Det finns lokala kvinnogrupper. Kvinnor och män kan i princip inte träffas samtidigt. Men io-

kala kvinnogrupper träffas för att påverka. Det är guld värt att få vara med och följa detta.

I Afghanistan finns fortfarande en stor plats reserverad för historieberättare och Inger samlar på sig den ena gyllene stunden efter den andra.

Det är fascinerande att varje gång få lära sig något nytt om Afghanistans historia eller om islam, få inblickar i personliga öden.

En gång reste jag och en annan kvinnlig läkare till en vaccinationsklinik i Paktika i en svårtillgänglig del av landet, med vägar som var som en blandning av puckelpist och speedwaybana. Där satt tre män och väntade. I långa skägg och med var sitt barn eller barnbarn i knät. En helt fantastisk bild. Så frågade vi hur det om sig att de kommit.

Om ni lyssnade på BBC på radion, så skulle ni också veta att ni ska vaccinera era barn", svarade de högst allvarligt.

Det var så roligt.

Deis som exempel på att folk faktiskt lyssnar på BBC på landsbygden, deis för att afghanerna har en sån stark självkänsla, genom hela sin historia. De har aldrig låtit sig koloniserars. Behandlar man dem okay, blir man själv behandlad med en ofantlig gästfrihet.

Desutom är det så vackert, betonar Inger.

Utbildning och sjukvård hjälpur landet på fötter

Byar och städer ligger så högt upp över havet. Det känns som att vara uppe bland stjärnorna i Vintergatan. Även själva huvudstaden Kabul ligger högt, nära 2.000 meter över havet.

DET ÄR FÖRSTÅS en himmelsvid skillnad mellan sjukvårdsarbete i Jämtland och i Afghanistan, men Inger har ändå börjat fundera på erfarenheter att föra vidare.

– Vissa saker här får mig att tänka på Jämtland. Eisenhower lär ha sagt att planer är värdelösa om man än bygger upp i en plan så dyker det ändå upp externa faktorer, kring och annat, som gör arbetet meningslöst, men icke förtty så måste vi titta framåt. Det skulle jag önska att vi gjorde i Jämtland också.

– Tänk att sätta sig vid sidan av och måla upp framtidsscenarier. Det är ett gott initiativ i sig. Och det har vi alldeles för lite exempel av i sjukvården hemma.

Mycket har hon att berätta om, jämtläkaren som hamnat på världens tak, som Afghanistan kallas eftersom halva landet beräknas ligga högre än 2.000 m över havet. Det hon slutar med är ändå den speciella tanke hon fick när hon var inne i den afghanska staden Ghazni, där ett av kommitténs tre kontor finns, tillsammans med Sofia Uddeholm, också från Östersund.

– Det var speciellt, säger hon och tänker med ett snett leende tillbaka på den stjärnklara kvällen, att vara där ute i mörkret i Ghazni. Det var nästan för osannolikt, två tjejer och båda från Östersund.

AKE JOHANSSON

Svenska Afghanistankommittén, SAK, bedriver hjälpverksamhet i Afghanistan sedan början av 80-talet. Idag är kommittén välkänd och verksamheten drivs med hjälp av över 20.000 medlemmar, givare och faddrar i Sverige. Många svenska skolor har etablerat sig som fadderskola till en skola i Afghanistan.

Desutom får kommittén stora bidrag från Sida, FN och EU.

Kommittén har tre regionala kontor i Afghanistan, ett huvudkontor i Peshawar i Pakistan och ett kontor i Stockholm.

Sammanlagt får cirka 8.000 afghaner, inklusive tillfälligt anställda, sin lön från SAK. Hälften av dem är lärare.

Verksamheten består framför allt av utbildning, hälsa och sjukvård samt olika landsbygdsprojekt som vattenbrunnar och nyodling av spannmål.

20 ÅR AV KRIG varit fördömande för

ett land som redan tidigare var ett av världens fattigaste. Hjälpbehovet har inte minskat. SAK:s omsättning 1998 var drygt 80 miljoner kr. Anders Fänge är platschef vid SAK-kontoret i Pakistan. Han är kritisk mot inte bara medias utan också politikers bild av Afghanistan.

– Vi måste försöka förstå att talibanerna inte är en regering i den mening vi är vana vid, förklarar han. De är snarare en ultrademokratisk rörelse, där talibanerna på landsbygden inte anser sig tvungna att följa vad som sägs i Kabul.

Han gör en liknelse. Vi är vana vid att se en organisation som en pyramid, där beslut tas där uppe och sedan sprids neråt inom pyramiden.

Men talibanerna är mer som en pannkaka med mängder med bubblor, lufthål.

– När beslut tas och ska spridas så försvinner informationen ut genom någon

av alla bubblorna och kommer inte fram.

– Vi driver skolor, inklusive flickskolor, i samma nivå som tidigare. Vi har inte behövt stänga en enda skola. Det finns även exempel där talibaner själva bestämmer sig för att starta flickskolor.

I DAG GÅR CIRKA 155.000 unga afghaner i skolor med SAK-bidrag. Av dem är 30.000 flickor.

Anders Fänge menar att det är mest i de stora städerna som talibanerna driver den hårda linje, som vi har fått läsa om i media. Den är sann där. Men på landsbygden, där den största delen av befolkningen bor, är det en annan värld.

– Så länge vi kan fortsätta arbeta på det sätt vi vill där, i samarbete med lokala myndigheter, är det självklart för oss att fortsätta.

– Det är för det afghanska folket vi arbetar. Inte för talibanerna i Kabul.

AKE JOHANSSON

— Talibanerna räknar med att bli åtyddas

*På uppdrag
i Afghanistan*

Talibanerna har förbjudt all musik. Vid vägsparter hänger gamla kassetthand gittande i bonnarna. 20-åriga killar stoppar bilur och letar efter kassetter med musik.

Det berättar Sofia Udeholm, som arbetar som informator vid Svenska Afghanistankommitténs kontor i Pakistan. En resa in i Afghanistan gav massor med upplevelser.

Kabul tyckte Sofia var fascinerande, trots att staden är så sönderbombad.

— Jag var inne i Afghanistan en vecka i november, berättar Sofia Udeholm. Innan dess var gränsen stängd och återåt kom snön och det blev svårare att resa.

— Vi var en dag i Kabul, huvudstaden. En fascinerande stad. Jag har många positiva upplevelser därifrån, trots att staden är så sönderbombad.

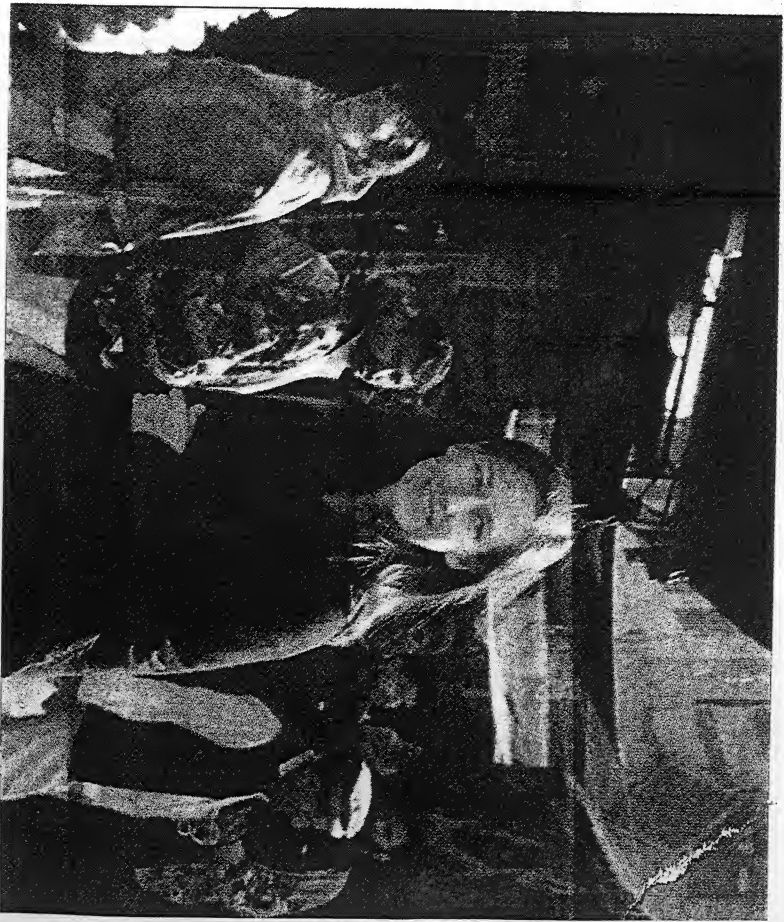
Sofia arbetar som informator åt Svenska Afghanistankommittén, SAK, placerad på huvudkontoret i Peshawar på den pakistanska sidan gränsen. Hon är uppvuxen i Östersund, där övriga familjen bor kvar.

Sofia har studerat Informationskunskap i Stockholm. Under insamlingskampanjen Vårldens Barn hösten 1997 arbetade hon åt SAK och därefter vid hon förra året för att göra deras hemsida på Internet. När tjänsten som informator vid kommitténs kontor i Pakistan var otillfäst, ryckte Sofia in.

Gatumtyller.

Den gamla basaren i Peshawar är ett vanligt utflyktsmål, med bland annat en känd guld- och penningbasar liksom en Berättarnas gata. Här är Sofia i en del med mycket lyger till sällu.

FOTO: ÅKE JOHANSSON



RESAN I AFGHANISTAN var kort men gav en bild av ett helt annorlunda land och So-fia delar gärna med sig av sina upplevelser.

– Utefter vägen mot Kabul passerade vi helt utbombade byar, utan en enda människa. Så kommer vi helt plötsligt och oväntat in på en stor boulevard i en relativt orörd del av staden. I den andra sidan av staden däremot ligger hus efter hus, kvarter efter kvarter helt i ruiner. Chauffören berättade, att där hade varit en skola, där var den gamla teatern, utbildningsministeriet och så vidare.

– Vi stannade och tankade bilen i Kabul. Den första som kom fram till oss var en änka i blå burqa (ett långt heltäckande klädstycke som bara öppnar ett litet fönster för ögonen). Hon tiggade pengar.

Afghanistan är kanske världens mintätaste land. Det beräknas finnas cirka 10 miljoner minor i ett land med mindre än tjugio miljoner invånare och nästan en och en halv gång så stort som Sverige. Sofia har en speciell minnesbild:

– På de värsta ställena kan man se efter min-röjning, att det varit bara en halvmeter mellan minorna. Platserna där minröjare plockat bort minor är markerade med vitmålad stenar.

– Vägspärrarna glömmar jag inte heller, be-

rättat Sofia. Talibanerna som styr nästan i hela landet har förbjudt all musik och sång. När man kommer till en vägsgräns ser man något glittrande som hänger och fladdrar i luften. Det visar sig vara rester av kassetband.

Det skrottade Sofia gott åt. Men chauffören skrattade inte. Han gömde snabbt undan bandet i bilstereon och bytte musikbandet mot ett band med uppläsning ur Koranen, det enda godkända.

– Talibanerna stoppade oss och lyssnade igenom alla band som låg framme. Deras vaktstyrkor består av 20-åriga killar. Chauffören varnade mig hela tiden att jag skulle linda schalen ordentligt runt håret och ansiktet. Det är noga att följa alla regler. Killarna räknar med att bli åtlydda.

– Chauffören sa bara att det varit ännu värre. Under och närmast efter kriget var det gott om lokala banditgång som jävlades längs vägarna och ville ha sina vävgavifter. Nu var det "bara" talibanerna.

DET ÄR FÖRSTÅS en speciell upplevelse för en ung svenska att gå omkring i talibanland med alla deras speciella regler och bestämmelser. Även om längden på skäppet inte berörde Sofia så fanns det andra.

– Jag hade tillstånd att vara i staden Ghazni under förutsättning att jag bar en schal som täckte håret och det mesta av ansiktet. Det tillståndet måste jag bära på mig om jag skulle bli stoppad.

– Jag kommer aldrig att glömma denna resa. Jag vill gärna åka dit igen. Och då till de norra delarna som talibanerna inte lyckats ta. Jag har förstått att det är annorlunda där. Kvinnorna kan vara friare och det påverkar hela samhället.

– Men inne på en gård i Ghazni i södra Afghanistan var det också annorlunda. Som om talibanernas bestämmelser inte räckte innanför murarna. Där är det de egna traditionerna som gäller. Hjälpna från Svenska Afghanistan-kommittén fungerar också som en motivkraft till talibanerna. Det räcker att människorna känner sig uppmärksammade.

Hjälpna till Afghanistan är inte okontroversiell. Bland annat en känd EU-kommissionär, Emma Bonino, kräver stopp för allt bistånd på grund av talibanernas kvinnodiskriminerande politik. Men Sofia håller inte med henne.

– När man är där blir man övertygad om att det är riktigt att fortsätta. Det går inte att tänka annat när man ser att hjälpen når fram, vem som styr känns mindre relevant. Det handlar

om mat, utbildning och hälsa. Ska flickor få utbildning så lär de inte prioriteras av talibanerna. Så länge flickor kan få utbildning och kvinnor nås i hälsoarbetet, så måste vi fortsätta.

– Kommittén är så stor där att ingen i Sverige knappt kan förstå det. Men man kan hoppas att landet någon gång får en regering som vill och kan ta över det vi i dag gör.

SOFIA VILL TACKA jämtarna för det stora stödet efter jordbävningsskatastrofen förra året då kommitténs inbetalningskort blandades in i både LT och ÖP.

Då kom det in mycket pengar från Jämtland. I dag har 12.500 småhus byggts upp av Svenska Afghanistankommittén i de drabbade områdena.

En tänkt kort period på kontoret i Peshawar växte till ett halvår. När det här läses kanske Sofia redan är hemma. När hon slutar här blir hon arbetslös, men hoppas på ett nytt jobb som informatör. Nånstans i världen.

Men visst ska hon hinna med att hälsa på hemma i Jämtland. Senast var hon där under jul och nyår, hos mamma och pappa och lillebror i Östersund.

AKE JOHANSSON

Hallå...



GP

... Ulla Ås-

berg, som i dag reser till Afghanistan för att arbeta som regionchef för Svenska Afghanistankommittén i halvmiljonstaden Jalalabad i Afghanistans östra del.

• **Vad skall du göra där?**

– Afghanistankommittén ansvarar för utbildning, hälsovård och lantbruksutveckling. Jag basar för alltihop och vill höja kvaliteten genom att samarbeta med lokala myndigheter, FN-organ och biståndsorganisationer.

• **Varför har du fått jobbet?**

– Jag är född och uppväxt i Indien och talar hindi, urdo och punjabi och naturligtvis engelska. Jag har 35 års erfarenhet av biståndsarbete i Pakistan och Indien. Jag tror mig veta hur en kvinna skall uppträda i ett muslimskt land. Jag har koderna i mig. Jag har svensk lärarutbildning och har varit anställd i Bergsjön i 15 år. Det räcker väl?

• **Ser du några stora svårigheter?**

– En kan vara förtroendet med den nu sittande regimen av talibaner. De flesta talibaner anser att flickor och kvinnor skall vara i hemmen. Våra program är jämställda och vi vill att också flickorna skall gå i skola. Vi har samtalat och jag har sagt att om inte Mohammed går till berget, så får berget gå till Mohammed. Vi startar skolor med kvinnliga lärare där flickorna bor. Det skall bli 15 nya klasser före årets slut.

• **Vem avlönar dig?**

– Svenska Afghanistankommittén, som får bidrag från EU, Sida och FN och ideella bidragsgivare.

• **Vilka personer jobbar du ihop med?**

– Jag reser ensam ner som 60-årig kvinna. Jag blir första kvinnan på en chefspost. På kontoret finns ett svenskt par med erfarenhet från Laos. Övriga medarbetare är manliga afghaner. Jag blir som en höna i en tuppgård.

• **Hur länge blir du borta?**

– Om allt går som det skall, blir det två år, enligt kontraktet. (In-Sha-Allah, om Gud vill, säger Ulla.) Jag får ledigt en vecka, när jag har arbetat i tio veckor. Kanske reser jag då till indiska vänner.

• **Vad kommer du att sakna mest?**

– Mina barn och barnbarnen Oscar, Max, Alma och Gustav. Jag saknar redan eleverna i Bergsjön samt en stor grupp brännskadade efter branden vid Backaplan. Jag har haft regelbunden kontakt med dem och följt deras utveckling. Det har blivit många goa stunder.

• **Varför kallas du "Brändis"?**

– Jag brände mig svårt i ansikte, hals, händer och armar vid en gasexplosion i Pakistan mars 1982. Jag är opererad 15 gånger i ansiktet och förstår väl hur många av ungdomarna har det. Det handlar om såväl yttre som inre smärter som man måste leva med i många år.

Eva Heyman

Eva brinner för brunnar

RITEÅ (PT)

– Jag brinner för brunnar.

Det säger Eva Ollén i Luleå, som tagit dragit igång Projekt Norrbrunn, ett norrbottniskt initiativ till förmån för Afghanistans barn. Eva är ombud för Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) i länet.

Målet för kampanjen är att under 1999 samla in 260 000 kronor, vilket motsvarar 1 000 kronor från varje tätort i Norrbotten.

Sida skjuter till fyra kronor för varje krona som norrbottningarna skänker till Projekt Norrbrunn, exempelvis genom att sätta in pengarna på Svenska Afghanistanhjälpens postgirokonto 90 07 80-8. Om insamlingsmålet, 260 000 kronor, uppnås kommer 260 byar på Afghanistans landsbygd att få brunnar med rent dricksvatten.

Eftersom priserna sjönk något förra året räcker nämnda summa till *minst* 260 brunnar, vilka förses med enkla, mekaniska och driftssäkra handpumpar. De är så lätta att handha att till och med ett barn kan pumpa upp vatten med hjälp av dessa handpumpar som tillverkas i Pakistan av danska Afghanistankommittén. En annan viktig sak är att man kan köpa reservdelar till dessa traditionella pumpar i basarerna.

Utbildar mekaniker

Svenska Afghanistankommittén utbildar mekaniker som sköter underhållet av pumparna och brunnarna. Samordnare av Afghanistankommitténs brunnprojekt är en afghansk ingenjör vid namn Mohammad Zia, som inbjudits till Sverige med anledning av kommitténs årsmöte i Stockholm i slutet av april. Härom veckan besökte Eva Ollén och Mohammad Zia bland annat Piteå, där de höll ett offentligt möte angående Projekt Norrbrunn.

– En del människor tycker nog att jag har fått vatten på hjärnan, säger Eva. Men tillgången till rent vatten är så oerhört grundläggande. De flesta sjukdomar som härjar bland barn och vuxna i Afghanistan hör samman med bristen på rent vatten. Barnadödligheten är mycket hög – vart fjärde barn dör före fem års ålder – och de flesta av de här barnen som dör av olika mag-sjukdomar skulle kunna räddas till livet om de slapp att dricka förorenat vatten.

I de trycksaker som Eva Ollén sprider till bibliotek, kyrkor, politiska organisationer, fackföreningar, massmedia etcetera uppges att var och en av de brunnar som Svenska Afghanistankommittén ställer i ordning med hjälp av bland annat Sidamedel förser 10-15 familjer med vatten i 30 år. Mohammad Zia säger dock att en brunn enligt hans erfarenhet kan hålla i evighet under förut-

sättning att den underhålls. Och en enda brunn räcker för att förse ända upp till 40 familjer med i genomsnitt sju familjemedlemmar, det vill säga hela 280 personer, med dricksvatten.

Betalar med vete

De afghanska byborna får betala för vattnet med vete. SAK utbildar lokala mekaniker som med avkastningen från vetet både kan tjäna sitt uppehälle och underhålla brunnarna. Förutom hjälp med konstruktion och delar till brunnen får byn också undervisning i hygien.

– Det är viktigt, tycker jag, att man har ett system där befolkningen får ett eget ansvar och inte lärs att sitta och vänta på att biståndsorganisationerna kommer och fixar allt, menar Eva Ollén, som för övrigt kallar sig "en vanlig hemmafru". Hennes engagemang för Afghanistan och SAKs arbete med att gräva eller ställa i ordning gamla brunnar som förstörts under kriget – befolkningen har varit utsatt för krig under 20 år – föddes sedan hon talat med Olof Erstorp som arbetat med brunnar i Afghanistan under flera år. Hans lågmälda berättelse om arbetet på fältet väckte Eva Ollén.

Behovet av brunnar i Afghanistan beräknas till cirka 40 000. Kostnaden uppgår till cirka 25 miljoner kronor. Hittills har 5 172 brunnar ställts i ordning genom SAKs försorg.

Eva Ollén framhåller även att av SAKs cirka 8 000 anställda är bara sexton personer icke-afghaner.

ROLF HALLGREN
0911-645 27

Bistånd till Afghanistan glöms bort?

STOCKHOLM: I tjugio år har Afghanistan varit i krig, ändå är den konflikten ofta nästan bortglömd av medierna. Men medan andra konflikter dyker upp, stäl uppmärksamheten under en tid och ebbat ut, fortsätter kriget i Afghanistan som vore det helt obeligt.

I Saltjöbaden utanför Stockholm är representanter för de stora biståndsgivarna till Afghanistan samlade i två dagar för att försöka formulera de områden på vilka det är möjligt att ge en effektiv hjälp åt afghanska folket.

Stödgruppen

Sammanställningen av de 16 största biståndsgivarna kallar sig Stödgruppen för Afghanistan.

stan. De nordiska länderna är bland de mest aktiva.

Bland gästerna finns höga representanter för FN, bland andra Unicef-chefen Carol Bellamy, generalsekreterarens Afghanistansamordnare för FN:s verksamhet i Afghanistan Erick de Mul.

Svårt motivera bistånd

Men inte ens dessa experter hade helt lätt att förklara hur humanitärt arbete fungerar i ett totalt sönderslaget land som fortfarande är i krig. Och samtidigt, betonade värdens kabinetssekreterare Jan Eliasson, är det nödvändigt att formulera vad som kan utvärderas för att inspirera till fortsatt bistånd. Men bland kommentarer som andades viss optimism – som

flera fall ett intresse av att hålla konflikten i gång.

— Generalsekreteraren Kofi Annan har skärpt kritiken mot de utomstående krafter som medverkar till att kriget fortsätter. Vi hoppas kunna anordna ett möte med grannländerna och med afghansk närvaro och kanske få dem att ändra inställning.

Skrattar uppglivet

Men sådana möten har ju hållits i årtal och resulterat i löften som genast brutits?

— Javisst!

FN-medlaren gör en talande gest och skrattar lite uppglivet. Nej, Lakhdar Brahimi är inte mera optimistisk om en snar fred i Afghanistan än han var för ett år sedan.

GERT HOLMERTZ/TT

Oppositionen vägrar ge upp

Afghanistan. Striderna i norr driver hundratusentals människor på flykt. FN förbereder stor hjälpsats.

DN 6/8-99

Av Hans Olsson

I en kraftfull offensiv försöker nu den afghanska talibanregimen att slutföra krossa sina motståndare. Oppositionen drivs längre och längre upp i bergen och har tvingats släppa kontrollen över flera byar. Men striderna är hårda och oppositionsstyrkorna rapporteras även ha tagit tillbaka några områden som de tidigare förlorat.

Samtidigt är tiotusentals människor på flykt. Oppositionsledaren Ahmad Shah Masoud sa häromdagen att det handlar om 250 000 människor som tvingats lämna sina hem sedan offensiven startade för en dryg vecka sedan. Några officiella siffror finns ännu inte, men FN

förbereder en stor hjälpsats för att undsätta flyktingarna.

Vi räknar med att det är minst 100 000 människor som behöver hjälp. Vi tror inte att det är någon panik med bostäder, men däremot måste vi försöka bistå dem med sådana saker som mat och mediciner, säger Jacques Franquin som jobbar med Afghanistan för FN:s flyktingkommisariat UNHCR.

Det stora problemet blir att få fram nödhjälpen. Området där flyktingarna finns är mycket otillgängligt och vägen till områdena är helt livlös sprängd under de senaste oroligheterna. Flygtransport är inget alternativ, enligt Jacques Franquin, eftersom

helikoptrar är alltför lätt mål för skott.

Vi sitter just nu och tittar på en översikt över landet som kan ha flyktingarna. Kan de gå där det är så svårt att nå, säger han.

Soldater från den talibanleda regimen inledde offensiven mot oppositionsstyrkorna den 28 juli. På några dagar när var det precis ett år efter det att fjolårets så kallade sommaroffensiv drog i gång. Talibanerna kontrollerar redan nio tiodelar av det afghanska territoriet och vill genom de nya attackerna även skaffa sig herraväldet över resten.

Talibanstyrkorna slår mot de Masoud-rogna trupper som försöksamt sig i bergen i Panjsherdalen. Masoud är av

tadzjikiskt ursprung medan talibanerna i huvudsak är persiska – den största befolkningssgruppen i Afghanistan.

Hittills har rapporterna från striderna varit mycket knapphändig. Båda sidor har rapporterat framgångar för sig själva och förluster för motståndarna. På torsdagen kom till exempel obekräftade uppgifter om att 1 000 talibansoldater stupat i en motoffensiv från Masouds trupper. Lika obekräftade är uppgifterna om vem som har kontroll över vilket område.

Man får ta alla sådana uttalanden med en stor nypa salt. Det är troligt att talibanerna försöker slå tillbacka men man måste komma ihåg att de är klart underlägsna i styrka och har svårt att hålla sina positioner. För dem är det förmodligen bättre att locka motståndarna upp i bergen, säger Peter Hjukström, förbundssekreterare i Svenska Afghanistankommittén.

Han beklagar de pågående striderna, som i ett första skede leder till en humanitär katastrof och sedan till en fortsatt instabil situation i landet.

Även om talibanerna skulle ta kontroll över hela territoriet skulle det fortfarande bli en uppstånlig situation. En regim som är monopoliserad av talibanerna skulle bara kunna upprätthålla det här monopoliet

med en kraftig våldsupparrustning. En olycklig sideeffekt av det pågående kriget är att matförsörjningen i bland annat huvudstaden Kabul kan strypas. Just nu är det skör tid och jordbrukarna har svårt att ge sig ut på fältet när striderna är i gång.

Det finns en uppenbar risk att skörden blir förstörd eller inte blir möjlig att ta in. Det kommer att innebära stora problem i vinter, säger Peter Hjukström som befärar att det kan bli utdragna strider.

— Om det inte blir något militärt avvägande den här säsongen kommer det att bli samma tragiska dödsdöms nästa sommar.

hans.olsson@dn.se 08-738 11 68

Stöd krigets oskyldiga offer

Den så kallade talibanmilisen i Afghanistan inledde i slutet av juli månad en storoffensiv mot sina kvarvarande motståndare i landets norra del. Detta bara några få dagar efter att fredssamtalen under FN:s ledning i Uzbekistan brutit samman. Denna offensiv tros ha inneburit att flera hundratusentals oskyldiga civila tvingats på flykt när talibanmilisen intog områden i norr, främst då på den så kallade Shomaliplatån. Rapporter om diverse övergrepp har också förekommit från stridsområdet. Under slutet av förra veckan inledde dessutom de antitalibanska styrkorna i norr en motoffensiv och har i stort sett lyckats pressa tillbaka talibanerna till den ursprungliga fronten. Detta har naturligtvis inte förbättrat situationen för civilbefolkningen och man riskerar att fronten ska böjla fram och åter under den närmsta tiden.

De som i första hand drabbas i detta krig, som i de flesta andra konflikter, är de som är helt oskyldiga till krigseländet och som inte själva deltar i några militära aktiviteter. Det är en fattig civilbefolkning - män, kvinnor och barn - som bara önskar att få leva i fred, ges en möjlighet att överleva och skapa en framtid för sig själva och sin familj i ett av vår världs allra fattigaste länder. Denna fattiga afghanska civilbefolkning står nu inför ännu en humanitär tragedi. Stora folkmängder tvingas på flykt, människor dödas och skadas, skörden från ett av landets viktigaste jordbruksområden - Shomaliplatån - riskerar att gå till spillo etc.

Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) är en av de få hjälporganisationer som i dag kan ge omedelbar assistans till den drabbade civilbefolkningen tack vare en bred verksamhet (hälsovård, utbildning, dricksvattenpro-

jekt, katastrofinsatser etc) på den afghanska landsbygden. SAK har också 17 års erfarenhet av att bedriva hjälparbete i den speciella afghanska miljön. Detta under såväl det sovjetiska ockupationskriget som det nuvarande inbördeskriget. Den svenska hjälpen har i många olika katastroflägen kommit att vara avgörande för många afghaners överlevnad. Oavsett om det till exempel gällt i samband med olika krigshandlingar eller naturkatastrofer (som under jordbävningsskatastroferna 1998).

I de områden som berörs av de nuvarande stridshandlingarna driver SAK bland annat 38 sjukvårdskliniker med en sammanlagd personalstyrka på över 200 läkare, sköterskor och biträden. Ofta är detta den enda hälsovård som står till buds på den fattiga afghanska landsbygden. Dessa hälsovårdscentraler spelar nu och framgent en väsentlig roll för den utsatta civilbefolkningen. Kriget innebär förutom död, lemlästning och fördrivning även att möjligheten att överleva i området riskerar att slås i spillror. Sjukdomar följer i spåren på flyktingströmmar, förstörda dricksvattenbrunnar, förstörda bostäder, hunger på grund av förstörda grödor och dödad boskap med mera. Oavsett utgången av striderna kommer kriget att ha mycket negativa konsekvenser för områdets och landets befolkning en lång tid framöver. Därför är den utsatta civilbefolkningen i stort behov av bland annat SAK:s verksamhet.

Svenska Afghanistankommittén har därför öppnat sitt insamlingskonto - Svenska Afghanistanhjälpen, pg 90 07 80-8 - för hjälp till krigets offer. Varje krona hjälper oss att förstärka våra insatser för att kunna hjälpa det afghanska inbördeskrigets offer.

Thomas Magnusson

Fruktlösa samtal om Afghanistan

Inbördeskriget. Talibanerna och oppositionen har ägnat stridsuppehållet åt fortsatt rustning.

Av Hans Olsson

Ännu ett fruktlöst försök att få slut på inbördeskriget i Afghanistan ändade i går morse. De styrande talibanerna och oppositionen lämnade förhandlingsbordet utan att ha nått några framsteg. Nu ökar riskerna för att en ny blodig offensiv ska blossa upp inom kort.

- Tyvärr talar det mesta för att det blir en sommar i krutets tecken. Vår information vittnar om att båda parter rustat sig till tänderna sedan förra stridsperioden för 8-9 månader sedan. Sådana här förhandlingar kan tyvärr innebära att man talar för fred men rustar för krig, säger Peter Hjukström, förbundssekreterare i Svenska Afghanistankommittén.

FN:s specialsändebud i Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi

var lika pessimistisk efter förhandlingarna:

- Vi förväntade oss inga mirakel och det inträffade heller inga mirakel, sade han till nyhetsbyrån Reuters och uttryckte stark oro för hur talibanerna nu kraftsamlat inför en kommande offensiv. Det är precis ett år sedan talibanerna drog i gång nya strider mot grupperna kring den förra regeringens militära befälhavare Ahmad Shah Masood. Offensiven var framgångsrik för talibanerna, som nu beräknas ha kontroll över 90 procent av Afghanistan.

De senaste fredsträffarna ägde rum i Uzbekistans huvudstad Tasjkent. FN:s specialsändebud hade lyckats samla sex av Afghanistans närmaste grannländer, USA och Ryssland samt talibaner och opposition kring förhandlingsbordet för att

försöka lösa den långa konflikten. Talibanerna dök upp först i sista stund, sannolikt efter påtryckningar från grannlandet Pakistan.

Men när samtalen avslutades på tisdagsmorgonen lämnade parterna varandra utan att ha kommit överens om något som kan få slut på konflikten. Frågor om eldutt-

hör och utväxling av fångar var uppe till diskussion men ledde inte till några framsteg. Det mest positiva var att parterna i alla fall inte ställde sig helt kallsinniga till att sätta sig i nya förhandlingar längre fram.

- Man får välkomna det i all sin blygsamhet, säger Peter Hjukström. All lösning mot stabilitet måste gå via samtal.

Fakta/konflikten i Afghanistan

- 1979 gick sovjetiska trupper in i Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul och dödade premiärministern Hafizullah Amin.
- Det folkliga motståndet mot den Sovjetstyrda regimen var stort i mitten av 1980-talet. Brödrade Mujahedin få vapen utifrån och anföll bland annat Kabul med tung beskjutning.
- 1989 lämnade Sovjetunionen Afghanistan. 14 500 sovjetiska soldater och en miljon af-
- ghaner förlorade livet mellan 1979 och 1989.
- 1997 intog talibanerna Kabul. De hamnade genast på kollisionskurs med de utländska hjälporganisationer som var på plats, framför allt på grund av talibanernas behandling av kvinnor, som uteslötades från arbete och straffades hårt för alla överträdelser. Samtidigt fortsatte inbördeskriget.

Han tror att det blir svårt att nå fram till en lösning vid förhandlingsbordet om inte omvärldens engagemang i konflikten ökar. Särskilt USA har en viktig roll som påtryckare.

- Världssamfundet måste påtala att nu får det faktiskt vara färdigt med det här kaoset i Afghanistan. Grannländerna måste också inse att ju längre konflikten pågår, desto lättare är det att den sprider sig och påverkar dem.

- Ett sätt att få slut på det här vore om man kunde samla kring ett vapenembargo. Det finns ingen inhemsk förmåga att upprätthålla kriget inne i Afghanistan. Om det inte kom in några vapen och ammunition utifrån skulle kulsprutorna snart tystna.

► hans.olsson@dn.se
08-738 11 68



Skräckens land

Civila försvinner under talibanernas styre

Av Nina Hjeltnen Bild: Martin Adler/Phoenix

Oron genomsyrade stämningen, men ingen höjde rösten.

Det var som om de flesta lärsades att allt var som vanligt. Men det var det inte. Makten hade bytt skepnad i huvudsraden, slängt livet ärskellige hundra år bakåt i tiden och spridit skräck genom att visa vad som händer dem, som inte följer de nya härskarna.

Ex-presidenten Najibullahs klanmedlemmar hade skurit ner den brutna och skänmarade kroppen som invärd i fjocka rep dinglat i Arianu-rondellen.

Bybor berättar
om förevunna
bröder.

Vi stod utanför ingången till Röda Korset, som nästan var ensamt biståndsorganisation kvar när de övriga evakuerade sin personal i invasionens timme. Irriterat motklackade vi på varandra och försökte få fram för att försöka hitta någon, som kunde berätta för honom vad som hänt hans bror.

Vaken titrade genareat åt min hall.
Hans bror är gripen av tallduerna och
varje morgon kommer han och undrar om
det är någon som vet något om hans bror.
Det driver folk till vansinne. Ingen vet ju.
Allt fler bröder försvinner. Bröder som ingen
vet var de är. Eller vad som hänt med dem.
Männens desperata klagan blev till allas
förvildan, en förvildan som ingen orkade
mot, Han knuffades ut och stäplade fram
i sina okända kängor.

—Förlåt mig, så den restige mannen som

— Han kommer varje morgon och frågar om sin brot. Ingen av oss vet var våra bröder är någonstans. Och han bara frågar efter sin egen.

September 1996. Den fundamentalistiska

adriahallens och tog med överläppen vapen-
stycka över makten i huvudsaken Kabul.
Regeringsstyrelsen hade flytt norrut till
Kabul och hade sammanträtt med sina
medlemmar med sina familjer. Många av
dem från Pushtur. Genast inleddes en
kampanj på den från Pushtur som fanns
i närheten av huvudsaken, de antogs ha samför-
svarat med den avsett makten. Talibanerna spär-
rade av kvarteren där de bodde genom att
slänga till gatbornen med stridsvapen och
granater. Sedan gick från dorr till dorr för att genom-
söka husen. Människor anklagades för att

gömma vapen eller ha radiokommunikationsmedel. För att inte bli avaktat av Al-Qa'ida i Irak och Afghanistan, som följande Shadi Massoud, Fört många som fört sig ut i världen under dessa natliga rader, är det viktigt att vara medvetna om de risker som finns för att bli avaktat av Al-Qa'ida i Irak och Afghanistan.

Det ryktades att bokhandlaren hade skjutits vid berget där TV-masten finns, anklagad för att vara kommunist och för att ha sålt böcker som inte talibanerna godkände.

Män försökte gömma sig för att inte skiljas från sina familjer. Några lyckades gömma sig i råd, andra grävde ner sig i jorden, de flesta bytte ständigt närliggande hårbädden. För vem skulle ta hand om familjen om mannen försvann?

Ingen berättade för utomstående om det vardagliga livet, vem kunde man lita på?

– Tack, allt är väl och min familj mår bra, var standardfrasen vid en stilla förfälgan om hur det stod till.
– Har du sovit i natt?
Då föll masken.

– Nej, jag har suttit uppe och rökt hela natten.

De nattliga raiderna fortsatte på dagarna och spreds till andra bostadsområden, där olika afghanska grupper höllde. Den minskande jakten blev snart etnisk. Talijaner, utbaserade och bazars förföljdes och förföljs av taliberna som dominerats av den största folkgruppen i Afghanistan, pashtuner. Fordon stopptes och människors greps, till och med på Råda Korsets personalbussar, och sattes ut på väg till arbetet.

Inne många protesterade oflönligt mot att skyddad civila i tusentals greps av talibanerna. Allt eftersom gjorde vad de kunde för att att själva söka rätt på sina försvunna släktingar. Det verkade dock som om många myndigheter att vända sig till utomstående för hjälp, som om de inte riktigt liar på att in-
formationella organisationer kan eller vill göra något.
Ännu fler oskyddiga civila afgifter har försvunnit sedan dess.

— Jag hade tur idag, berättade en av många unga män jag brukade träffa på olika strällen.

– Den religiösa sedlighetspolisen grep mig på väg till bazaren mitt i stan. Men jag hade pakistanska rupier i fickan som jag erbjöd dem, då lät de mig gå.

Den religiösa seilighetspolisen kor omkring
baland åsnekröror, får och cyklar i moderna
tyllpilsdrivna jeepar. De är kladda i turba-
neter och beväpnade med piskor, kalachni-
kov- eller granatgevär. Till synes slump-
mässigt kan de plöjsigt stanna och slå till
med någon som går på gatan. Det kan vara
en kvinna som de anser har fel färg på
strumporna. Hon bestraffas genom psyk-
slag.

Talibanerna har bestämt att en kvinna endast får gå ut i sällskap av en manlig blodssläkting. När talibanerna slår kvinnorna, tvingas männen stå passiva vid sidan om och bara rita på. Ett effektivt fortryck ill vardags som är satt i system av afghaner, styrda av KGB, som under Sovjetokkupationen satt in den kommunistiska regeringen och som nu är talibanska ministerråd.

Några av de som fångats kan också kö-

Det fanns inga journalister närvarande när

staden i slutet av augusti - 98 intog talibanerna i Shariif i norra Afghanistan. Talibanerna hade tidigare räkat ut för ett överskådande nederlag i staden med vidriga övergrepp mot fångade talibansoldater och hämnades nu genom att under tre dygn avärta tusentals människor. Kropporna låg i stora dumprar i massgravar i okända öster om Mazari-Sharif, ogivnetten berättar hur lastbilar kört fram och tillbaka med döda kroppar. Och hur stanken de som ett täcke över staden.

Ein mamma vfeade sie inte ut på eatan

många unga män jag brukade träffa på olika ställen.

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Några av de som fångats kan också kö-

för att ta hand om kroppen av sin hjälpsamma som lag och rättsmål i tre dygn. Han skapade som skedd för Sverige Afghanistankommittén sköts ihjäl under konvolut, inte en av 13 utsläppta husbäckare som fanns kvar i Mazar-i-Sharif.

Upprättade ett stort antal husbäckare som fanns kvar i Mazar-i-Sharif. Upprättade ett stort antal husbäckare som fanns kvar i Mazar-i-Sharif.

Ministeriet försvarar här och där, i Mazar-i-Sharif, förbjudit talibanerna från att använda sig av husbäckare som fanns kvar i Mazar-i-Sharif.

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att 14 år, besvärar manna som samfäst om kring oss.

– Många flydde och vi som samfäst besvärar oss, vi såg hur man arbetade i husbäckarna. De flygde i husbäckarna, inte en av 13 utsläppta husbäckare som fanns kvar i Mazar-i-Sharif.

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bera, tittar hon på mig som om jag vore rikligt dum.

– Vem försöker du? Här skaffar vi mat till vi har mat.

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Talibanernas offensiv hotar tusentals civila

DN 990731

Afghanistan. Amnesty varnar för övergrepp.

Från TT-Reuters

KABUL Talibanregimens offensiv mot Ahmad Shah Massouds område i norra Afghanistan gick in på tredje dagen på fredagen, och uppgifterna om framgångar och bakslag skildte sig starkt hos olika källor.

Tidigt på morgonen förekom omfattande artilleriduell eller vid två frontlinjer 25 kilometer norr om Kabul, uppgav invånare i den afghanska huvudstaden.

Samtidigt startade talibanernas attackplan från Sovjetgränsen för att göra sin insats vid de två fronterna, men också för att angripa ett fäste för Massoud nära Panjshirdalen åtta mil nordväst om Kabul.

Massouds artilleri sköt mot flygplatsen. Där skall fyra personer ha dödats.

Den talibanska regeringen förnekade på fredagen de rapporter som säger att den saudiske terroristen Osama bin Ladin planerar att lämna Afghanistan.

– Rapporten om att Osama har lämnat eller planerar att lämna Afghanistan är helt ogrundad, sade Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, talesman för talibanerna. **AP**

Oppositionskällor i Pakistan hävdade att 30 civila dödats under talibanernas offensiv nära Kabul.

Tusentals civila liv hotas av krigshandlingarna, hävdar också Amnesty International i ett uttalande från i torsdags: "Återigen riskerar civila att vara mål för övergrepp i en konflikt där de inte tar del. Både talibanerna och deras fiender har tidigare begått svåra brott mot civila", hette det.

Internationella röda korskommittén och FN-organen har inställt sina flygningar till Kabul på grund av de dagliga robotangreppen mot flygplatsen.

Talibanerna inledde i tisdags en stor offensiv för att utsträcka sin kontroll, som nu omfattar 90 procent av landet, även till de dalar i norr som behålls av Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Talibanerna, vilkas regering erkänns endast av Pakistan, Saudiarabien och Sittens araberimiren, har stött stöd i den stora pashtunska folkgruppen medan Massoud företräder en del etniska och religiösa minoriteter.

Källor som står talibanerna nära säger att de har haft vissa framgångar i områdena Tagab och Nejrab. Men inga officiella uppgifter föreligger.

Den landsflyktige saudiske terroristfinansieraren Osama Bin Laden uppmanade på torsdagen till terroristattentat mot amerikanska civila över hela världen. I en tv-intervju som sändes i Qatar sade Bin Laden att "varje amerikan är vår fiende... Amerikanerna är ett ont folk". TT-DPA SVD 12/6-99

FN manas utreda uppgift om massaker

SVD 23/5-99

Kabul: Den afghanska oppositionen väddade på lördagen till FN att utreda uppgifter om att den styrande talibanmilisen har anställt massaker bland minoritetsfolket hazarerna.

Begäran om en utredning har riktats direkt till det speciella FN-sändebudet Karmal Hussein, sade en talesman för oppositionen. Han tillade att oppositionsalliansen i samarbete med människorättsorganisationer själv försöker kasta ljus över "dess brott mot mänskligheten".

Amnesty International har bekräftat att man kontrollerar uppgifter om att "hundratals familjer" skall ha dödats när talibanerna återerövrade staden Bamiyan i centrala Afghanistan den 9 maj.

Afghanska, pakistanska och oberoende västerländska källor har tidigare bekräftat att urskillningslöst dödande förekom i Bamiyan efter talibanernas inmarsch och att minst 250 bostadshus förstördes. Bamiyan-provinsen befolkas till största delen av hazarer, ett mongoliskt minoritetsfolk, men personer som besökt staden sedan den hamnade under talibanernas kontroll beskriver den som nästan tömd på hazarer. Stämningen sades vara mycket spänd, TT-AFP.

Hårda strider i Afghanistan

Kabul: Hårda strider utbröt i Afghanistan mellan talibanerna och oppositionen vid frontlinjen norr om Kabul natten till söndagen. Striderna ledde till spekulationer om att de styrande talibanerna har tidigare lagt sin länge väntade storoffensiv, sade oberoende källor på söndagen.

Artilleristrider och raketbeskjutningar hördes i huvudstaden fram till söndagsmorgonen.

Om det här inte är början på offensiven så är det definitivt slutet på truppframflyttningar med sikte på en mer omfattande strid, sade en oberoende källa som AFP citerade.

Bedömare har länge väntat sig en stor sommaroffensiv från talibanerna med syfte att besegra oppositionsalliansen norr om Kabul och få ett slut på det långa inbördeskriget. TT-AFP

SVD 28/6-99

Fredssamtal inleddes på måndagen mellan den islamfundamentalistiska talibanrörelsen som styr Afghanistan och en oppositionsallians som bekämpar talibanerna. Förhandlingarna sker under FN:s överinseende och tvådagarsmötet äger rum i grannlandet Uzbekistan. TT-Reuters 20/7-99

SVD

Afghanistans fundamentalistiska talibanregim kommer inte att utvisa den terroristmisstänkte Usama bin Ladin eller lämna ut honom till USA, sade en talesman för talibanerna på torsdagen. USA har bett talibanerna att lämna ut bin Ladin, eller åtminstone utvisa honom ur landet, så att han kan åtalas för den roll han tros ha spelat i bombningarna av de amerikanska ambassaderna i Kenya och Tanzania den 7 augusti förra året då 224 människor dödades. AP

Talibanoffensiv i Afghanistan

Kabul: Afghanistans islamiska talibanmilis inledde på onsdagen en offensiv på tre fronter nordöst om Kabul. Det uppgav oppositionen inom den så kallade Nordalliansen.

Efter hård artilleribeskjutning under natten gick talibanerna till angrepp med infanteri mot positioner runt Panjshirdalen, uppgav oppositionsalliansens talesman. TT-AFP

SVD 29/7-99

Terrorist kvar i Afghanistan

KABUL: Den talibanska regeringen förnekade på fredagen de rapporter som säger att den saudiske misstänkte terroristen Osama bin Laden planerar att lämna Afghanistan.

Osama bin Laden står med på den amerikanska polisen FBI:s lista över de tio mest efterlysta brottslingarna i världen och han misstänks bland annat för att ligga bakom sprängattentaten mot de amerikanska ambassaderna i Kenya och Tanzania förra året då 224 människor dödades. (FLT-AP)

SN 31/7-99

Tusentals afghaner flyr strider

Kabul/New Delhi: Tusentals flyktingar strömmade på tisdagen in i Kabul efter de senaste dagarnas hårda strider i norra Afghanistan. I själva stridszonen är ännu större människomassor på flykt undan striderna mellan talibanerna och oppositionsalliansen.

Talibanmilisen hade enligt uppgift varnat civilbefolkningen i norr att en motattack väntas från oppositionen, efter talibanernas stora framgångar under den så kallade sommaroffensiven de senaste dagarna. Oppositionen uppger att 200 000 människor har evakuerats från stridszonen.

Enligt en flykting från Charikar, Mohammad Razak, dödades många av de flyende civila av minor som oppositionen strött ut för att sätta stopp för talibanerna. AP

Talibaner intar provinshuvudstad

AFGHANISTAN Den afghanske oppositionsledaren Ahmed Shah Massoud och hans styrkor retirerade i går in i den strategiska Panjshirdalen för att undkomma den styrande talibanmilisens snabba framryckning. Talibanerna kontrollerar sedan förra året mer än 80 procent av Afghanistan och verkar nu ha föresatt sig att lägga under sig resten. I går fortsatte talibanerna framryckningen och intog städerna Charikar, sex mil norr om Kabul, och Mahmud-i-Raqi, huvudstad i provinsen Kapisa 3/8-99 (TT-Reuters)

Tusentals flyr talibaner

ISLAMABAD: Tusentals människor var på måndagen på flykt undan talibanerna i provinsen Parwan i norra Afghanistan, uppgav oppositionsstyrkorna.

Talibansoldater understödda av stridsflyg ryckte samtidigt fram mot Takhar och häftiga strider utkämpades i Khanabad i provinsen Kunduz, enligt oppositionens talesman Hussain Anwari.

Även i Dar-i-Suf i provinsen Samangan, 35 mil norr om huvudstaden Kabul, fortsatte striderna, uppgav Anwari.

Oppositionsstyrkorna lyckades lägga beslag på en helikopter som landat vid fronten. I attacken dödades åtta talibansoldater och tio andra sårades. SN 3/8-99 (FLT-AP)

14

Ovantat kvinnoarbete

■ ■ ■ De styrande talibanerna i Afghanistan har för första gången officiellt gett tillstånd till kvinnor att arbeta med en utländsk hjälpoorganisation. Avtalet mellan det Schweiz-baserade Terre des hommes och talibanerna innebär att 50 afghanskor får arbeta i ett program för bistånd till barn i Afghanistan. Det har tagit ett och ett halvt år av förhandlingar för att uppnå överenskommelsen. (Metro)

DN 2/8-99 Talibanerna intog strategisk flygplats

AFGHANISTAN. Den afghanska talibanmilisen erövrade på söndagen flygbasen Bagram norr om Kabul och riktade därigenom ett hårt slag mot oppositionsstyrkornas befälhavare Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Genom att inta Bagram håller talibanerna på att skära av försörjningslinjen till oppositionens starka fäste Panjshirdalen ett tiotal mil norr om Kabul. För första gången på tre år kan inte heller Massouds artilleri nå fram till Kabul.

Genom den nya storoffensiven, som började i förra veckan, hoppas de konservativt islamiska talibanerna kunna slå ut Massouds tadjjikiskt dominerade styrkor efter att tidigare ha besegrat uzbekiska och hazariska motståndsrörelser. Massouds grepp om de nordöstra provinserna samt Panjshirdalen och orter strax utanför den är det enda återstående hindret för talibanerna att ta kontroll över hela Afghanistan. Talibanerna håller i dag mellan 80 och 90 procent av landet.

Talibanskt flyg och helikoptrar bombade Istalif, den sista orten på huvudvägen norrut från Kabul som oppositionen fortfarande håller. Dessutom närmade sig talibanstyrkorna orterna Charikar och Jabal-us-Saraj vid vägen in mot Panjshirdalen. TT-Reuters, Kabul

140 000 flyr striderna i Afghanistan

SVD 7/8-99

GENÈVE, TT-AFP, AP

► Uppemot 140 000 människor har flytt undan de senaste striderna mellan den islamiska talibanmilisen i Afghanistan och dess motståndare anförda av Ahmed Shah Massoud, sade FN:s flyktingkommissariat UNHCR på fredagen.

Enligt FN-organets talesman Judith Kumin i Genève är flyktingarna på väg mot Panjshirdalen, där Massoud har sitt högkvarter, för att senare fortsätta mot den nordöstliga provinsen Badakstan.

UNHCR har 5 000 ton livsmedel liksom filter och tält i beredskap i grannländerna Tadjikistan och Kirgisien om kris uppstår, sade hon.

Talibanerna, som kontrollerar omkring 90 procent av Afghanistan, försöker enligt rapporter som nått FN tömma Shamali-slätten.

Talibanerna förstärkte sina positioner på fredagen. Talibanska stridsflygplan anföll områden som hålls av oppositionen, men ingen skadades, sade en av oppositionens befälhavare, Bismillah Khan.

Talibanmotståndare erbjuds amnesti

AFGHANISTAN. De afghanska talibanernas högste ledare mulla Mohammad Omar erbjöd i går skydd och strafffrihet åt de afghanska oppositionssoldater som går över till den styrande islamistiska milisen.

Erbjudandet framfördes via den Pakistanbaserade nyhetstjänsten Afghan Islamic Press.

Metro 5/8-99 (TT-Reuters)

"Talibaner utförde massaker"

AFGHANISTAN. Oppositionen i Afghanistan anklagade på måndagen de styrande talibanerna för att ha mördat hundratals bybor norr om Kabul. Massakern skall ha ägt rum förra veckan, då regeringstrupper intog och höll ett antal byar under tre dagar.

- Vi har ingen exakt siffra, men de första uppskattningarna talar om mellan 200 och 300 människor, sade Mohammad Aref, talesman för oppositionsalliansens befälhavare Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Talibanernas talesman Abdul Hai Mutmaen avvisade oppositionens påståendet som "totalt grundlösa".

DN 10/8-99

TT-AFP, Kabul

Talibaner tvingar bort befolkning

AFGHANISTAN. De styrande talibanerna i Afghanistan har bränt byar och sädesfält för att tvinga bort befolkningen i de delar av landet som de nyligen erövrat. Det rapporterar FN:s representation i huvudstaden Kabul.

I fredags och lördags flydde över 10 000 människor från Shomalidalen.

Fördrivningen står enligt FN i strid med talibanernas officiella politik. AP, Islamabad

DN 16/8-99

FN och EU ger hård kritik mot talibaner

Metro 16/8-99
ISLAMABAD FN och EU kritisera de afghanska talibanerna skarpt i går för att de åter orsakat stort lidande bland befolkningen.

Talibanerna har låtit utrymma Shomaliområdet norr om Kabul och flyttat tusentals familjer till utbombade lokaler i Kabul, där det råder akut brist på vatten och mat. (TT-Reuters)

Talibanerna bränner byar

Kabul: FN anklagade på söndagen talibanmilisen i Afghanistan för att bränna ner byar och därmed skapa en flyktingvåg. Mordbränderna sker under den offensiv som talibanerna har inlett för att driva bort oppositionsledaren Ahmed Shah Massouds trupper norr om huvudstaden Kabul.

- Det är en hemsk syn därute, sades det i ett uttalande från FN:s samordnare i Kabul.

FN fruktar nu att tusentals flyktingar skall ta sig till Kabul, där det redan råder svår matbrist bland de 400 000 invånarna. Talibanerna medgav på söndagskvällen att de sprängt hus i flera byar och att de "förflyttat" lokalbefolkningen ut ur stridszonen. TT-REUTERS

SVD 16/8-99

Talibanerna grep hundratals

KABUL: Talibanerna har gripit hundratals personer i Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul och anklagar dessa för att vara infiltratörer från oppositionsstyrkorna i norr som tagit sig in i staden förklädda till flyktingar, uppgav ögonvittnen. Samtidigt rapporterade oppositionen nya framgångar i norr.

De omfattande polisräderna i Kabul inleddes i söndags och fortsatte under måndagen. Flertalet av de gripna är tadjikier som kommit till Kabul efter den senaste tidens strider i Shomalidalen.

- Infiltratörerna tog sig in i staden för att skapa oro, sade polischefen Abdul Razzak. Han tillbakavisade uppgifterna om att hundratals personer gripits och sade att det hittills bara rörde sig om ett sextiotal män. SN 17/8-99 (FLT-AP)

SV. D. 19/8-99 Fredsörsök i Afghanistan

DUSJANBE/TT-REUTERS

► Pakistan inledde på onsdagen ett försök att mäkla fred i grannlandet Afghanistan där dess allierade, talibanerna, nu försöker att slutgiltigt krossa sin sista riktiga motståndare, veteranen Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Två höga pakistanska företrädare - inrikesministern och Kabulambassadören - kom på onsdagen till Tadzjikistans huvudstad Dusjanbe för att träffa en nära medarbetare till Massoud. De reser hem igen på torsdagen. Nästa steg blir att de besöker talibanernas högste ledare mulla Mohammad Omar i Kandahar på lördag.

Pakistan är ett av de endast tre länder som har erkänt talibanregimen men avvisar ständigt anklagelser om att man håller islamistmilisen med vapen och förnödenheter.

Talibanrörelsen föddes i pakistanska koranskolor och dess mål är att, när oppositionen väl är krossad, bygga upp världens renaste muslimska stat.

Afghanistan

Explosion i talibanstad. En kraftig explosion skadade Kandahar, talibanernas andliga huvudstad, på tisdagskvällen. Enligt de första rapporterna dödades flera människor och andra skadades i explosionen. Människor flydde sina bostäder i panik, enligt nyhetsbyrån AIP. 25/8-99
DN TT-Reuters, Islamabad

Sprängdåd i Afghanistan

SV. D. 26/8-99

KABUL, TT-AFP, AP

► Sju människor dödades vid en våldsam explosion på tisdagen i Kandahar, som är de styrande talibanernas högkvarter i södra Afghanistan.

Lokala källor uppgav att explosionen vållades av en sprängladdning och att dess

mål sannolikt var talibanernas högste ledare, mulla Mohammad Omar, som dock undkom oskadd. Det var i går inte klart vem eller vilka som låg bakom.

Stadens invånare var först övertygade om att de utsattes för ett nytt anfall från USA och många flydde i panik.

Talibanerna skyddar Bin Ladin

AFGHANISTAN. En av Afghanistans högste ledare, mulla Mohammad Rabbani, försvarade på torsdagen den islamistiska statens vägran att lämna ut Usama bin Ladin.

Bin Ladin anklagas av USA för att ligga bakom bombningarna av USA:s ambassader i Tanzania och Kenya förra året. Över 200 människor dödades, de flesta kenyaner i en byggnad intill.

Bin Ladin, som är från Saudiarabien, är en svuren fiende till USA. Washington har krävt honom utlämnad för att ställa honom inför rätta.

- De otrogna och FN tillskriver oss uttalanden om att talibanerna stöder terrorister som Usama.

- Men USA har inte gett oss något bevis på att han är inblandad i terrorhandlingar.

- Vi anser det inte nödvändigt att en muslim rannsakas i ett otroget land, sade Rabbani, talibanernas näst högste ledare, inför åhörare i Kabul.

Han framhöll också att Afghanistan inte har något utlämningsavtal med USA.

Fredagen är årsdagen av USA:s attack med kryssningsrobotar på bin Ladins läger i Afghanistan, en attack som följde på bombningarna av USA:s två ambassader i augusti förra året. 26/8-99 TT-Reuters, Kabul

AFGHANISTAN

Talibaner intog flygbas

SV. D. 2/8-99

KABUL, TT-REUTERS

► Den afghanska talibanmilisen erövrade på söndagen flygbasen Bagram norr om Kabul och riktade därigenom ett hårt slag mot oppositionsstyrkornas befälhavare Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Genom att inta Bagram håller talibanerna på att skära av försörjningslinjen till oppositionens starka fäste Panjshirdalen ett tiotal mil norr om Kabul.

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Sista motståndet

Ögonvittnen beskrev hur långa led av talibansoldater strömmade norrut från Kabul för att befästa greppet om Bagram.

Stridsvagnar, trupptransportfordon och terrängbilar med raketgevär monterade på flaket ingick i kolonnen.

Uppgifter från oppositionen om att den hade tagit till-

baka Bagram efter bara några timmar kunde inte bekräftas av andra källor.

Genom den nya storoffensiven, som började i förra veckan, hoppas de konservativt islamiska talibanerna kunna slå ut Massouds tadjikiskt dominerade styrkor efter att tidigare ha besegrat uzbekiska och hazariska motståndsrörelser.

Massouds grepp om de nordöstra provinserna samt Panjshirdalen och orter strax utanför den är det enda återstående hindret för talibanerna att ta kontroll över hela Afghanistan.

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Dessutom närmade sig talibanstyrkorna orterna Chari-kar och Jabal-us-Saraj vid vä-

gen in mot Panjshirdalen. Längs vägen mot Bagram låg mängder av stupade Massoudsoldater. Ambulanser med skadade talibaner körde söderut mot Kabul.

Ögonvittnen såg hur pakistanska frivilliga i talibanarmén sköt ihjäl en tillfångatagen Massoudsoldat. Andra pakistanska rekryter kopplade av med att äta frukt och fira Bagrams fall.

Civila liv står på spel

Tre gånger tidigare har talibanerna försökt erövra Panjshirdalen men slagits tillbaka. Inte ens de sovjetiska styrkorna lyckades på 80-talet inta den smala, slingrande dalgängen där Massoud skapade sitt rykte som genialisk gerillakrigare.

Amnesty International befarar att tusentals civila liv står på spel under den nya offensiven och har väddat till stormakternas regeringar att försöka sätta stopp för striderna.

Afghanistans ledare hindrar

AV BURSHEY ARMAN

Afghanistan är ett land i Asien. Där bor mer än tio miljoner människor. Ungefär som i Sverige. Afghanistan ligger långt bort men här i Sverige finns det människor som varje dag tänker på Afghanistan.

Svenska Afghanistankommitten startade för flera år sedan. Gruppen bildades när Afghanistan blev ett fritt land. Landet Sovjetunionen hade förut soldater i Afghanistan och ville bestämma i landet. När Sovjetunionen tog bort sina soldater behövde Afghanistan hjälp.

Svenska Afghanistankommitten började hjälpa Afghanistan. Det var arton år sedan. Kommitten hjälper det afghanska folket med medicin och böcker och bygger skolor i landet.

Människor i världen behöver varandra. Det behövs människor som tar hand om andra. Peter Hjukström och de andra i Svenska Afghanistankommitten är några av dem.

Jag besökte Svenska Afghanistankommitten för att få veta mer om dem. Peter Hjukström har arbetat med kommittén i flera år. När vi träffades kände jag genast att jag tycker om honom.

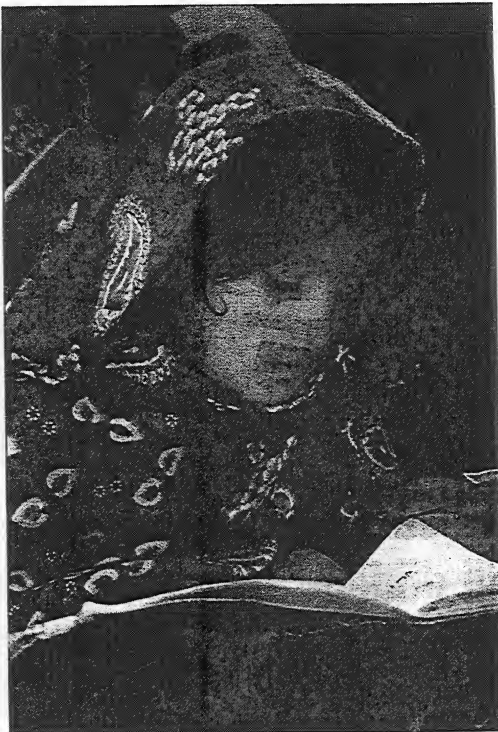
Jag kände att han är en bra människa med ett gott hjärta. Han tänker verkligen på de fattiga människor som är kvar i Afghanistan.

Han tänker på att barnen ska få det bra i framtiden. Han vill att barnen som bor i Afghanistan ska kunna lära sig att skriva och läsa.

I Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul får flickor inte gå till skolan. De som bestämmer i landet kallas talibaner. De tror på religionen islam. De har stränga regler och har förbjudit flickor att gå i skolan.

Det finns föräldrar som vill att deras flickor ska gå i skolan. I Kabul måste de föräldrarna skaffa egna lärare till sina barn.

Men ute på landet i Afghanistan



Ledarna i Afghanistan hindrar flickor från att gå i skolan. Men ute i byarna på landet går flickor i skolan ändå.

hjälp Afghanistankommitten barnen att gå i skolan.

Jag är själv född i Afghanistan. Jag växte upp där. När jag kom till Svenska Afghanistankommitten i Stockholm kände jag mig hemma. På vägen hängde en stor karta med Afghanistan på. Där fanns mycket vackra bilder på naturen i Afghanistan. På golvet låg en vacker afghansk matta.

Peter Hjukström hade en bok i handen. Boken har Svenska Afghanistankommitten skrivit. Peter visade en spännande bild i boken och berättade om sina resor i Afghanistan.

På bilden fanns en pojke

som förlorade sin högra hand i kriget. Peter berättade att han har träffat just den pojken. Pojken gick i en skola som kommittén har byggt. När han slutade skolan blev han lärare.

Jag såg i Peters ansikte att han blev ledsen när han talade om kriget i Afghanistan.

För flera år sedan fanns det inga skolor ute på landet i Afghanistan. I dag finns det många skolor som Svenska Afghanistankommitten hjälpt till att bygga.

Hur många skolor har ni byggt i Afghanistan?

– Svenska Afghanistankommitten

flickor från att gå i skolan

Burshky Arman kommer från landet Afghanistan. Hon är journalist och var praktiskt på 8 SIDOR i början av maj.

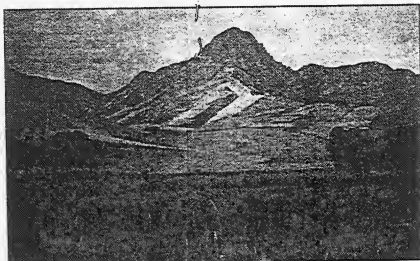
Burshky saknar sitt land. Men hon kan inte arbeta där. Ledarna i landet vill inte att kvinnor jobbar som journalister. De vill inte att flickor går i skolan.

Vi bad Burshky berätta något om landet Afghanistan. Här är hennes berättelse. Den handlar om Svenska Afghanistankommitten.

Kommitten samlar in pengar och hjälper till att bygga skolor. Och i de skolorna får flickor också lära sig läsa och skriva.



Burshky Arman



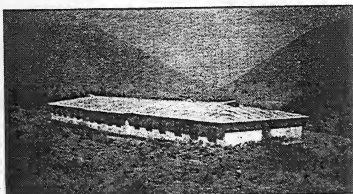
Afghanistan är ett land med många berg och många dalar. Det är ofta svårt att åka till byarna Vägarna är dåliga och människorna måste gå eller rida på åsnor.



De flesta eleverna i skolan sitter på golvet. Många av skolorna har inga stolar och bord.



En del av elever måste gå till fots i flera timmar för att komma till skolan. Det är viktigt att lära sig läsa och skriva.



Skolorna ute i landet behöver hjälp med böcker och pennor. Svenska Afghanistankommitten skickar saker som skolorna behöver.

har byggt 600 skolor i Afghanistan. Vi skickar böcker, pennor, skrivhäften och allt som skolorna behöver, berättar Peter Hjukström.

Varifrån kommer pengarna?

– Pengarna kommer från medlemmarna i Svenska Afghanistankommitten. Vi får gåvor från vanliga människor och från internationella hjälpgrupper, säger Peter Hjukström.

Får flickor gå i skolorna ute på landsbygden i Afghanistan?

– Ja, de får också gå i skolan. De får samma utbildning som pojkarna får.

Vilket är ditt bästa minne från Afghanistan?

– Jag ska berätta om ett av mina bästa minnen från Afghanistan, säger Peter.

– Det var mer tio sedan. Jag var på resa med några andra. Vi var på en väg genom en dal.

– I dalarna i Afghanistan bor de fattiga. Vi åkte med åsnor. Det fanns ingen väg som bilar kunde åka på. Vi kom till liten by. Vi var hungriga.

– Vi kom till dem som bodde högst uppe på berget. De kände inte oss men de bjöd ändå hem oss till sitt hus.

De hade bara bröd att äta.

– Efter några timmar kom några av deras grannar på besök till huset. Alla hade hade med sig brickor fyllda av mat.

De lade maten på en duk och sade att vi måste äta. Det var fattiga människor men mycket gästfria.

– Det här minner tänker jag på ofta och det värmer mitt hjärta. Det är ett av av mina starkaste och finaste minnen från Afghanistan. Jag kan aldrig glömma det.

– Jag tycker mycket om Afghanistan. Det är ett vackert land med vacker natur, säger Peter Hjukström.

Ny Taliban-offensiv i Afghanistan

Det var harde kamper nord for Kabul natt til torsdag etter at tusener av Taliban-krigere satte i verk en bred sommeroffensiv for å knuse styrkene til Ahmad Shah Masood.

Taliban-styrkene ble presset ut av Nejrab-distriktet igjen etter at den strategiske inngangen til Pansjir-dalen ble erobret fra Nord-alliansen onsdag.

Nord-alliansen til Masood er den eneste rivaliserende gruppen som Taliban ennå ikke har beseiret. Den ekstreme islamistiske bevegelsen kontrollerer nå 90 prosent av Afghanistans territorium.

BERGENS TIDENDE - FREDAG 6. AUGUST 1999

Opposisjonen til motangrep

KABUL: Opposisjonsstyrkene i Afghanistan har gjenerobret alle de fem byene som gikk tapt i forrige uke, og står nå bare fem mil fra hovedstaden Kabul, opplyste talsmenn for både opposisjonen og Taliban torsdag. Opposisjonen hevdet videre at opp til 500 soldater fra den regjerende Taliban-militisen skal være drept. Flere titall Taliban-soldater er tatt til fange, og mange andre flyktet opp i fjellene rundt hovedstaden Kabul, fordi de ikke greide å holde stand mot motstandsstyrkenes overraskende angrep. (NTB-AFP-DPA)

Taliban rykker mot Panjshir

Opposisjonsfronten i Afghanistan har som ventet ikke makket å stå imot den voldsomme offensiven fra regjeringsstyrkene til Taliban, som har fått hjelp fra militssoldater fra Pakistan og Kashmir. Styrkene til Afghanistans tidligere forsvarsminister Ahmed Shah Masood har trukket seg tilbake til Panjshir-dalen. Der forsøker de å tette inngangen i sør for Talibaners stormløp, slik de gjorde det framgangsrikt fem ganger under Sovjetunionens okkupasjon.

Taliban-offensiven rullet først over den strategisk viktige Bagram-basen nordøst for hovedstaden Kabul. Den fortsatte raskt mot Charikar på hovedveien fra Kabul nordover til Salang-passet gjennom Hindukush-fjellene som forbinder hovedstaden med den nordlige delen av landet som nå også er på Talibaners hender.

Masood, kjent fra motstands-kampen mot Sovjet som «Løven fra Panjshir», hadde opprettet sitt politiske hovedkvarter i Charikar, rett nord for frontlinja mot Kabul. I går falt neste skanse da Masoods nestkommanderende Abdur Rab Rasood ble tvunget til

å rømme Gulbahar, som ligger ved inngangen til det steile og tilsynelatende inntrengelige dalområdet. Dermed er også Jabal us-Seraj for øyeblikket under Talibaners kontroll, og neste framrykking er Rokha i den nedre delen av Panjshir-dalen, «De fem løvers dal», der anslagsvis 250.000 mennesker har søkt tilflukt.

Masood har sendt ut en appell om internasjonal hjelp til flyktningene og innbyggerne i dalen som nå bare kan nås nordfra, gjennom Badakhshan-provinsen.

Taliban innfridde ikke sitt helige løfte til folket om selv ikke søke makt, men i stedet forhandlet fram fred i Afghanistan så snart bevegelsen inntok Kabul. Det ga bevegelsen en rask folkelig opplutning i en krigstrøtt befolkning ute på landsbygda i de pashtunske områdene, den dominerende folkegruppa i landet.

Det er tre år siden, og Taliban har i høyeste grad søkt makt og ikke skapt fred. I stedet har Taliban nærmest blitt en fremmed okkupasjonsmakt i Kabul og andre byer på grunn av sine særeg-

Bin Laden vil forlate Afghanistan?

Den saudiarabisk-fødte terroristen Osama bin Laden vil forlate Afghanistan og søke asyl et annet sted.

Bin Laden frykter at han og hans tilhengere vil bli utsatt for et nytt amerikansk angrep, meldte det afghanske nyhetsbyrået AIP fredag.



Osama bin Laden

meldte AIP fra sitt hovedkvarter i Peshawar i Afghanistan, uten å antydde hvor.

USA skjøt 20. august i fjor krysserraketter mot mål i Afghanistan som skulle være treningsleire for terrorister under bin Ladens kommando. Radikale islamister hyller saucieren som en islamsk helt, men myndighetene i Riyadh har fratatt ham hans saudiarabiske statsborgerskap.

Han er nå på utkikk etter et oppholdssted i et annet land,

KL 990804

ne religiøse doktriner og dessuten blitt en politisk faktor i regionen. Ifølge *Afghan Information Press* skal Taliban også ha erobret grensebyen Sher Khan Bandar ved grensa til Tadsjikistan. Byen var en viktig forsyningshavn for tadsjikene Masood inntil for to år siden.

Masood blir presset stadig lenger østover i nordområdene, men tar nå sikte på å stenge Panjshir-dalen for eventuelt igjen å presse Taliban sørover mot Kabul igjen til høsten.

PMJ

Taliban-offensiv inn i avgjørende fase

Torsdag 5. august 1999 **Aftenposten**

Like etter feilslåtte fredsforhandlinger går Taliban-militsen til storoffensiv. Står opposisjonens siste bastion for fall?

GUNNAR FILSETH

Offensiven fra den islamske Taliban-hæren gikk i går inn i en utvidet og intensivert fase. Med artilleri, fly og bakkestyrker hamret de ultraortodokse «koran-krigerne» løs på sine mer moderate fiender på tre forskjellige front-avsnitt nord for Kabul.

Samordnede angrep, som betegnes som de kraftigste fra Taliban på nesten et år, ble satt i gang før dag gry. Iløpet av dagen rykket de videre frem mot Pansjir-dalen, den sterkeste bastionen til geriljakommandanten Ahmed Shah Masood, den legendariske «Løven fra Pansjir».

Taliban-krigerne slo seg allerede i morgentimene tvers igjennom motstandernes linjer på Tabag-fronten, hevdet en talsmann for Taliban. På de andre frontene møtte Taliban hard motstand, men vant likevel tereng.

Tilbud om amnesti

Noen timer etter den siste angrepsstormen sendte den øverste Taliban-lederen, mullah Mohammed Omar, ut et kommuniqué med tilbud om amnesti til motpartens soldater dersom de legger ned våpnene. De som ikke vil gi seg, vil bli behandlet etter islamsk lov, erklærte Taliban-sjefen, som ikke gikk nærmere inn på hva straffen kunne bli.

«Den endelige seieren er nå meget nær», heter det i

oppropet til folk i områder som fortsatt er under opposisjonens kontroll.

Enkelte observatører tror Taliban nå legger opp til det som kan bli sluttkampen om Afghanistan. I dag behersker Taliban-regimet 90 prosent av landet. Nå er målet åpenbart å få herredømmet også over den siste biten, men dette kan bli en hard nøtt å knekke.

Masoods sterke bastion

Tre ganger tidligere har Taliban-regimet forsøkt å erobre Pansjir-dalen, men er blitt slått tilbake. Ikke en gang de sovjetiske styrkene klarte i 1980-årene å treng inn i det smale dalføret. Masood skapte da sitt ry som geriljakommandant.

Etter at Taliban tok regjeringsmakten i Kabul for snart tre år siden, har de forsøkt å gjøre ende på motstandsgrupper rundt om i landet. Masoods grep om Pansjir og enkelte andre områder i nordøst er nå det eneste som hindrer Taliban i å regjere over hele Afghanistan.

Gjennom den nye offensiven håper fundamentalistene å slå ut Massoods tadsjikdominerte styrker. Tidligere har de praktisk talt gjort det av med de usbekiske og hazariske militsene fra opposisjonens krigsallianse. Taliban får sin sterkeste støtte fra den store pashtunske folkegruppen.

Det overordnede målet er sikre kontrollen over hele landet for dermed å kunne skape verdens «reneste» islamske stat. Taliban er blitt betegnet som verdens mest ekstreme islamske fundamentalister, med kompromissløse forbud og påbud som især går ut over kvinner.

Tidligere denne uken har Masood hevdet at omkring

250 000 sivile er kommet til Pansjir-dalen for der å søke tilflukt fra Taliban.

– De har hverken tak over hodet eller mat, sier en av hans talsmenn som retter en henstilling til omverdenen om nødhjelp.

Særlig alvorlig i denne forbindelse er det at Taliban nå har erobret den viktige flybasen Bagram. De har dermed brutt en av Masoods viktigste forsyningslinjer. Også en annen, landverts forsyningslinje er brutt.

Amnesty International sier i en rapport at tusener av mennesker kan være i stor fare. Det vises til at Taliban flere ganger tidligere har gjennomført massakrer på minoritetsfolk når de har tatt nye områder.

Sommerstid er som regel krigstid i Afghanistan, og et offensivt fremstøt fra Taliban var ventet etter at også den siste runden av fredsdrøftelser mellom partene brøt sammen i forrige uke. Under den siste offensiven har Taliban tatt store områder og en rekke viktige støttepunkter i Parwan- og Kapisa-provinser, som inntil siste uke var under Masoods kontroll.

Hvor er bin Laden?

Talsmenn for opposisjonens alliansen hevdet i går at en styrke av arabiske soldater som er lojale mot Osama bin Laden kjemper sammen med Taliban under de siste fremstøtene. Det er fortsatt uklart hvor bin Laden befinner seg. Taliban-regimet kom forleden med et dementi om at den påståtte terroristlederen har planer om å forlate Afghanistan.

– Rapporter om at Osama har forlatt eller har planer om å forlate Afghanistan savner et ethvert grunnlag, sa Talibans talsmann, mullah Mutawakil.

gunnar-filseth@aftenposten.no

Afghanistan: Nød og etnisk rensing

Norsk UD frykter at Taliban-geriljaen i Afghanistan driver med etnisk rensing. Minst 100 000 sivile er drevet på flukt de siste dagene, og nøden øker i omfang.

Minst 100 000 på flukt i Afghanistan

Norsk UD frykter etnisk rensing og mer nød. Taliban-regimet tvinger FN inn i fryktelige dilemmaer.

TOVE GRAVDAL

Etter at Taliban 28. juli startet offensiven mot den afghanske Nord-alliansen, har minst 100 000 sivile flyktet fra kamphandlingene. Kanskje er tallet så høyt som 350 000.

- Vi er sterkt bekymret for konsekvensene av offensiven. Flyktningesituasjonen er alvorlig, og enda verre er det at sporene fra Talibans fremferd i 1995-96 gir grunn til å frykte etnisk rensing. Ifølge ubekreftede rykter har Taliban begynt å skille menn fra kvinner og barn i områder der de har rykket frem, sier statssekretær Leiv Lunde i Utenriksdepartementet.

Når styrker i Kosovo skilte mennene fra kvinnene og barna, var det i flere tilfeller for å likvidere mennene.

Nødjelps-dilemma

Lunde sier UD er skuffet over at Taliban i stedet for å

fortsette fredsforhandlingene i nabolandet Usbekistan, velger å gå til krig mot Ahmed Shah Masoods styrker i nord. Den håpløse situasjonen i et av verdens fattigste og mest vanstyrte land, førte til at FN og flere lands ambassadører i Pakistan kom sammen til krisemøte i Islamabad i går.

- Fra dette møtet gikk det ut en oppfordring til FNs sikkerhetsråd om å diskutere hva vi nå skal gjøre, sier Lunde.

Han legger til at det ekstremt fundamentalistiske styret i Afghanistan setter FN i en fryktelig katterpine. For eksempel har Taliban de siste dagene tvunget 10 000 flyktninger inn i byen Jalalabad, der infrastrukturen er så elendig at selv et så lite antall mennesker er mer enn den tåler.

- Taliban regner med at FN tar seg av dem. Disse menneskene er i ytterste nød, men er det riktig å hjelpe dem så lenge Taliban er skyld i situasjonen? spør Lunde.

Strategi

Kabul-regimet er bare anerkjent av tre land, og blir kraftig fordømt for massiv kvinneundertrykkelse og

andre brudd på menneskerettighetene. Lunde mener Taliban er et av de absolutt vanskeligste regimer i verden å påvirke, og hva bør FN da gjøre?

- Vi må drive livreddende nødhjelp. Men Norge vil gi et klart signal om at selv om Taliban får full kontroll over landet og blir anerkjent i FN, så er det overhode ikke aktuelt med langsiktig bistand før menneskerettighetssituasjonen er bedret, sier Lunde.

Etter en ny bevilgning i sommer gir Norge i år 45 millioner kroner til nødhjelp i Afghanistan, fordelt på FN og private organisasjoner. - Vi er klare på at alle må følge en felles linje overfor regimet i Kabul, ellers kan bevilgningene kuttes, sier Lunde.

Han mener en samlet, humanitær front mot Taliban er eneste vei til bedring av menneskerettighetssituasjonen. Tidligere har FN-organisasjonene vært uenige om forholdet til regimet, noe Taliban utnyttet. Men nødhjelpen bør bli mer effektiv, og til det trengs det flere folk, og FN vil ikke sende for mange utlendinger inn i Afghanistan for å drive hjelpearbeid.

Offisielt heter det at tallet på utlendinger holdes lavt på grunn av sikkerhetssituasjonen. Men etter det Aftenposten forstår, er det ikke bare afghanske våpen som truer. USA jakter fortsatt på terroristen Osama bin Laden, og vil for all del unngå at utlendinger blir drept i et eventuelt nytt angrep mot Afghanistan. Det har FNs generalsekretær Kofi Annan fått klar beskjed om fra Washington.

Utålmodig

Lunde peker på at mer nødhjelp til Afghanistan også er nødvendig fordi flyktninger er på vei hjem fra Pakistan og Iran. Noen tvinges hjem; nabolandene er i ferd med å miste tålmodigheten med flyktninger som har vært der i snart 20 år. I Pakistan øker dessuten uroen over at Afghanistan avler skruppelløse ekstremister.

- Mellom 3000 og 10 000 pakistane under presteutdannelse i Afghanistan deltar i felttoget mot Masood. De er blant de verste til å utføre etnisk rensing og å trakassere afghanere som arbeider for FN, sier Leiv Lunde.

tove.gravdal@aftenposten.no
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Masood til voldsomt motangrep

Opposisjonsstyrkene i Afghanistan hevder å ha gjenobret alle de fem byene som gikk tapt i forrige uke.

Kabul

Minst 250 soldater fra den regjerende Taliban-militsen skal være drept, og opposisjonsstyrkene står nå bare fem mil fra hovedstaden Kabul, sa talsmenn for opposisjonen i går.

Flere titalls Taliban-soldater er tatt til fange, og mange andre flyktet opp i fjellene rundt hovedstaden Kabul, fordi de ikke greide å holde stand mot motstandsstyrkenes overraskende angrep. Blant de fangne etter kampene rett nord for Kabul var flere pakistanske soldater, sa opposisjonens talsmann Abdullah.

Ingen Taliban-talsmenn kunne eller ville i går kommentere de siste meldingene fra fronten. Opposisjonsstyrker under ledelse av kommandanten Ahmad Shah Masood gikk til angrep sent onsdag kveld, og inntok i går morges byen Gulbahar ved inngangen til Pansjir-dalen.

Deretter rykket Masoods styrker vestover og erobret

Jabul Seraj ved hovedveien nordover fra hovedstaden. Så beveget de seg sørover, omringet Charikar og avskår fluktrutene derfra, før de erobret denne byen, som ligger fem mil nordøst for Kabul.

Opposisjonen fortsetter sin motoffensiv, til tross for at Taliban har foreslått våpenhvile og tilbudt amnesti til alle som legger ned våpene. Den regjerende militsen har satt i verk ordnet busstransport av sivilbefolkningen bort fra kampområdene, for å forhindre en panikkartet flukt.

Informasjonsminister Mullah Amir Khan Mottaqi sa i går at familier fra disse områdene er sendt til byen Jalalabad i det østlige Afghanistan, «for deres egen sikkerhets skyld». Dette skjer i henhold til folkerettens bestemmelser om beskyttelse av sivilbefolkningen, tilføyde han.

I Pansjir

Talsmann Julian Bousac for den franske hjelpeorganisasjonen Léger uten grenser sier at selv om situasjonen ved fronten er uklar, hersker det ingen tvil om at opposisjonen har innledet en kraftig motoffensiv. Bousac berømmer seg selv inne i Pansjir-



Strateg. Ahmad Shah Masood har nok en gang vist at han kan snu tilbaketog til fremgang.

FOTO: SCANPIX/EPA

dalen, der Masoods styrker har holdt til.

Ifølge Bousac har de fleste av flyktningene som holdt til i dalen, nå begitt seg nordover for å komme lenger vekk fra kampene som raser rett sør for dalen.

- Moskene og skolene var fulle av kvinner og barn, disse menneskene har ingen ting med seg, og vi vet ikke hvor de er blitt av, sier han.

Talsmann for Masood sier at rundt 200 000 sivile hadde søkt tilflukt i Pansjir-dalen, mens tallet ifølge uavhengige kilder var nærmere 100 000. Før motoffensiven som ble innledet denne uken, kontrollerte Taliban det meste av Afghanistan med unntak av de nordlige landsdelene.

(NTB-AFP/DPA)

«Pansjirs løve» brøler igjen

I 20 år har den afghanske motstandslederen Ahmad Shah Masood vært kjent som en slu og målbevisst feltherre, som vet å lure sine motstandere opp i stry.

Kabul

De siste dagene har «Løven fra Pansjir» igjen vist seg som herre over situasjonen, på bekostning av den regjerende Taliban-militsen i Kabul.

Masood ble verdenskjent som geriljaleder allerede under den sovjetiske okkupasjonen av Afghanistan fra

1979 til 1989. Han opparbeidet seg en voldsom respekt, også blant folk som nå er blant lederne for Taliban, og det var i disse årene at han fikk tilnavnet «Løven fra Pansjir».

I dag er den tadsjikiskøttede Masoods styrker de eneste som fortsatt hindrer det fundamentalistiske islamist-regimet i Kabul i å ta makten over hele Afghanistan.

- Masood er ikke noe lett bytte. Og dersom alle meldingene om hans nye motoffensiv viser seg å stemme, kan det bety slutten på Talibanens drømmer om herredømme over hele landet, si-

er en diplomat med base i Pakistan.

Masoods styrker lyttet ikke til budskapet fra Taliban's øverste leder, Mullah Mohammad Omar, nylig. - Vi i Taliban er nå inne i slutfasen av vår strategi. Overgi dere mens dere kan, så skal dere få amnesti, var Omars budskap til opposisjonsstyrkene.

Masood har for lang erfaring med å snu tilbaketog til fremrykning til at han vil høre på det øret. Og hans tilhengere er altfor lojale til bare å kaste fra seg geværene, sier utenlandske observatører.

(NTB-AFP)

● PAKISTAN

Motstandsfronten skal angivelig ha drept pakistanske soldater i offensiven mot Taliban. Konflikten i Afghanistan står om regionale interesser.

Av Peter M. Johansen

Like tungt som Taliban-regimet i Afghanistans slo til med en offensiv mot motstandsfronten nord for Kabul, like overraskende raskt slo tidligere forsvarsminister Ahmed Shah Massoud, «Løven fra Panjshir», tilbake og gjenerobret sine byer: Gulbahar, ved inngangen til dalen; det «administrative» hovedkvarteret Charikar, og knutepunktet Jabul us-Seraj på hovedveien mellom hovedstaden Kabul og Nord-Afghanistan. Taliban-styrkene har fått forsterkninger fra *mujahedins* («hellig krigere») fra utlandet – pakistanere, kashmirere, arabere – men motstandsfronten hevder at flere pakistanske soldater er blitt drept i kampene nord for Kabul denne uka.

Det peker i retning av Pakistans militæretterretning, *Inter-Services Intelligence* (ISI), som støtter opp under Taliban-regimet etter å ha droppet hovedstøtten til Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leder for den islamistiske organisasjonen *Hezb-i-Islami*. Den taktiske endringa ble gjort av Benazir Bhuttos innenriksminister Nasrullah Babar.

Rekrutterer

Tusenvis av pakistanske ungdommer har siden 1994 sluttet seg til Taliban, dels rekruttert gjennom Pakistans egne islamistiske grupper og moskeer, dels av ISI, som i dag opererer ulike mujahedin-grupper som blir trent og utrustet i flere konflikter. De pendler nå mellom konfliktområdene, fra Kashmir til grensa mellom Usbekistan og Tadsjikistan, hvor det var raid inn i Tadsjikistan så seint som i november.

ISI har opprettet hovedkvarter i den tidligere kubanske ambassaden i Kabul, og legger knapt nok skjul på sine forbindelser med Taliban. Det er heller intet forbud mot å rekruttere til Taliban i Pakistan, selv om statsminister Nawaz Sharif og folk i hans hjemprovins Punjab og grenseprovinser North West Frontier Province nå har fått merke hvilke tveeggede sverd slike grupper er.

Pakistan bruker Taliban til å fremme sine interesser i Sentralasia – opp mot Iran, Russland og India,

som mer eller mindre direkte støtter motstandsfronten. Ved siden av Pakistan er det få andre enn Saudi-Arabia og Emiratene som har anerkjent Taliban.

Massoud får sine forsyninger via flybasen i Kuljab i Tadsjikistan, blant annet russiske Frog-7 raketter som ble brukt mot Kabul i fjor. Nye erobringer i

Talibans dødslist

I oktober startet en ny serie med attentater mot framtrepende afghanske ledere i Peshawar og Quetta. Noen av ofrene er tidligere ledere i Kabul-regimet, som styrte landet etter Sovjets ordre, og kan skrives på kontoen for hevn. Blant dem er tidligere kringkastningssjef Hashim Pakhtianae, broren til den siste partisjefen i Kabul, Najibullah, som selv ble lynsjet av Taliban-regimet. Han delte skjebne med partisjef Babrak Karmals forsvarsminister, general Nazar Mohammed Nazar, som ble skutt ned på åpen gate i Quetta i juli i fjor.

Drapsordre

Andre ofre regnes som nasjonalister, som er stikkord for pashtunere som gjerne ser kongen vende tilbake i spissen for et sekulært, pashtu-dominert styre. 12. januar slapp kommandant Abdul Haq, kjent fra kampene mot Sovjet i grensestrøkene mot Pakistan, unna et attentat fordi han ikke var hjemme; det var derimot hans kone, sønn og en tjener.

Abdul Haq er bror til den tidligere lederen for den østlige *shura* (rådet), der Taliban nå har kontrollen, og begge er nært knyttet til *maulavi* Yunus Khalis, en av de sju tidligere motstandslederne og nå den eneste av pashtu-lederne som er aktivt med i fronten mot Taliban.

En tredje gruppe ofre er intellektuelle og andre som er uttrykte motstandere av Taliban, som journalistene Abdul Hafiz Hamid Azizi, som overlevde attentatet i sentrum av Peshawar i oktober, og Najiba Sara ved *BBCs Pashto Drama Project*. Også hun klarte seg. Drapsordrene kom angivelig fra *maulavi* Mohammed Sarwar Mukhlis, antatt leder for Talibans etterretning.

Potensielle ledere

Drapslista er lang og omfatter en rekke kommandanter. Den

begynte å sirkulere i Peshawar for vel et år siden, ifølge afghanske kilder i Peshawar, og i august i fjor skal tre representanter for Taliban ha fordelt 100.000 dollar på 18 profesjonelle leiorder, afghanere og pakistane-re, hevder en høyere pakistansk sikkerhetsagent overfor tidskriftet *The Herald* i mars.

ISI og pakistansk *Special Branch* har gjort lite i forbindelse med attentatene. Det vaker spørsmål i politiske og diplomatiske sirkler om pakistanske krefter er ute etter potensielle ledere for et nasjonalt Afghanistan, eller mulig Pashtunistan, dersom Afghanistan skulle sprekke eller om Taliban mister makta til krefter med andre regionale forbindelser. På dødslista står angivelig sufi-lederen Pir Sayed Ishaq Gilani, leder for *Shura-i-Tafahum-o-Hamahangi Afghanistan*, og hans kone Fatana, leder for *Afghan Women Council*, begge sekulære kongevenner.

grensestrøka i nordområdene har presset Massouds forsyningslinjer fra Tadsjikistan lenger østover i grenseelva Amu Darya. Iran var nær ved å gripe militært inn da Taliban erobret industribyen Mazar-i-Sharif i fjor og gjenoppførte en omfattende massakre på shiamuslimer fra folkegruppa *hazara* og drept flere iranere i byen.

USAs jakt på bin Laden kan styrke hans posisjon

Ett år etter at to amerikanske ambassader i Afrika ble bombet, er fremdeles USAs hovedmistenkte, Osama bin Laden, på frifot – men jakten på ham er intens.

VERNON LOEB/
The Washington Post

Osama bin Ladens verdensomspennende terroristnettverk har vært under konstant press siden den saudiarabisk-fødte omvandrende mangelmillionæren skal ha registrert den dødelige bilbombingen av to amerikanske ambassader i Afrika i august i fjor.

Ifølge terrorreksperter både i og utenfor den amerikanske regjeringen sto bin Laden bak bombene.

Men de samme ekspertene er bekymret over at Clinton-regjeringens utblinking av bin Laden som landets fiende nummer én kan ha styrket hans posisjon i den islamske verden, og økt sannsynligheten for nye angrep fra ham eller hans etterfølgere.

– Han har utviklet seg til en karismatisk leder på samme måte som Irans avdøde ayatollah Khomeini, sier Kenneth Katzman, ekspert på Midt-Østen og terrorisme ved forskningsenteret Congressional Research Service.

– Dette bekymrer meg: Bin Laden er den eneste som står på det radikale, fundamentalistiske standpunktet: ingen kompromisser med Israel, ingen kom-

promisser med USA, ingen kompromisser med Egypt. Og han kan støtte seg til våpenmakt, sier han.

De to lastebil-bombene som eksploderte bare minutter etter hverandre på utsiden av ambassadene i Nairobi i Kenya, og Dar es Salaam i Tanzania den 7. august 1998, drepte 224 mennesker hvorav 12 amerikanske statsborgere, og skadet mer enn 5 000 mennesker.

Bin Laden og 16 påståtte kolleger, blant dem den egyptiske islamske Jihad-lederen, Ayman al Zawahiri, har siden blitt tiltalt i New York for å ha planlagt angrepene.

Tilfredshet

Amerikanske tjenestemenn sier med en viss tilfredshet at bin Ladens nettverk ikke har skadet en eneste amerikaner det siste året, et resultat de tilskriver omfattende etterretningsarbeid, endringer i lovverket og diplomatisk anstrengelser.

– Vi har ikke satt ham ut av spill. Men vi har i høyeste grad redusert hans evne til å stille i stand ting, sier Robert Oakley, en tidligere ambassadør med ansvar for antiterrorvirksomheten.

Mens enkelte tjenestemenn i Clinton-administrasjonen ønsker mer aggressive tiltak for å angripe bin Ladens skjulesteder i de afghanske fjellene, har Oakley advart mot dette.

– Faren for å treffe feil mål er veldig, veldig stor og vi må anta at det vil bli tungt forsvart, sier han.

Samtidig melder det afghanske nyhetsbyrået AIP at bin Laden vil forlate landet og søke asyl et annet sted. Bin Laden frykter at han og hans tilhengere vil bli utsatt for et nytt amerikansk angrep.

Enten årsaken er uvilje eller manglende evne til å drepe bin Laden, har amerikanske myndigheter forsøkt å trakassere eller isolere hans organisasjon, kjent som al Qaeda som betyr «Basen» på arabisk.

Antiterrorreksperter fra FBI og CIA, som arbeider tett sammen med etterretning over hele verden, har arrestert og avhørt et titalls personer fra Albania til Uruguay, mistenkt for å operere i samarbeid med bin Laden.

En av bin Ladens angivelig mest betrodde menn, Mamdouh Mahmoud Salim, ble arrestert i fjor høst av tyske myndigheter, Han er en av de fem som er mistenkt for å stå bak ambassadebombingen, og holdes i forvaring i New York.

En annen, Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, ble anholdt av pakistanske myndigheter og en tredje, Mohamed Rasheed Daoud al Owhali, ble arrestert i Kenya. I London holdes tre andre siktede i arrest.

Belønning

Samtidig har Utenriksdepartementet lovet en belønning på 5 millioner dollar (40 millioner kroner) for informasjon som fører til arrestasjon av bin Laden, og FBI satte ham i juni opp på listen over deres ti mest et-



Fanatisk. En tilhenger av den fundamentalistiske Osama bin Laden holder en plakett hvor terroristen er avbildet under en anti-amerikansk protest i Islamabad i forrige uke. FOTO: SCANPIX/EPA

tersøkte personer. Det reflekterer ikke bare den trusselen han utgjør, men også FBI's økende internasjonale oppgaver. Byrået har nå 1383 agenter engasjert i antiterror arbeid i USA og verden over.

Taliban-boikott

For et par uker siden stanset president Clinton all økonomisk handel mellom USA og Taliban-militsen og

beskyldte dem for å skjule den ettersøkte terroristen. Inntil da hadde Taliban-lederne benekket kjennskap til bin Ladens oppholdssted. To dager etter at sanksjonene ble satt i verk innrømmet de at han oppholdt seg i en del av Afghanistan som er under deres kontroll.

– Hvis vi klarer å opprettholde presset mot ham og følge den diplomatisk, politiske strategien, vil bin La-

den før eller senere gjøre en feil, sier en tjenestemann.

Andre mener at amerikanerne i jakten på bin Laden har gjort ham til et symbol for antistestlige følelser.

– Jeg har gjort det klart for amerikanerne at de har gjort Osama bin Laden til en stor helt i den islamske verden, sier Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, Talibans fremste representant i FN.

Tidligere CIA-tjeneste-

mann Milt Bearden, som ledet CIAs hemmelige kampanje for å ruste mujahedinbevegelsen i kampen mot Sovjet-styrkene på 1980-tallet, er enig.

– Man burde gå gjennom flyktningeleirene i Pakistan og telle hvor mange gutterbarn som har fått navnet Osama siden august i fjor. Tallet er skremmende, sier han.

(Norsk enerett: Aftenposten)

Taliban skremmer naboene

Aftenposten
6. aug. 99



Gunnar Filseth
Utenriksjournalist

Sommerstid er krigstid. Det har vært regelen i Afghanistan i mange år. Blir dette den siste krigssommeren? Taliban-kjemperne håper de nå er i gang med sluttkampen om Afghanistan. Deres argeste fiende, Ahmad Shan Masood - «Løven fra Pansjir» - vil det annerledes.

Den ultrareligiøse Taliban-militsen vil gjerne ha det unnagjort før sommeren er omme. Å trengte inn i «løvehulen» Pansjir på vinterføre er en håpløs oppgave. Masood er en dreven strateg som så mange ganger har gitt blodige svar på tiltale. Mange vil tro at han også denne gang rir stormen av.

«Profetens hær»

Men «Profetens hær» er i støtet, og på ny ulmer uroen over Taliban-trusselen blant Afghanistans sentralasiatiske naboer. Også Russlands gamle skrekkvisioner om fundamentalistiske farer sørfra har fått ny næring.

Det lutfattige og hitil langt på vei utilgjengelige Afghanistan ble en gang betraktet som verdens midtpunkt. Også i dag har det som nå er blitt «Talibanland», stor geostrategisk tyngde i en olje- og mineralrik region. Nå som tør kniver naboene om Afghanistan, til ulukke for afghanerne selv.

Krigens sponsorer

Taliban får sin sterkeste støtte fra den store pachtunske folkegruppen, og har Pakistan og Saudi-Arabia i ryggen som sponsorer og

pådrivere. Masood står i dag som et samlingsmerke for flere etniske og religiøse minoriteter. Dermed henter han regional støtte fra land som Iran, Tadsjikistan og Usbekistan.

I forrige uke forsøkte seks av landene - Kina, Iran, Pakistan, Tadsjikistan, Turkmenistan og Usbekistan - å megle fred under en konferanse i Tashkent. De har alle i forskjellige grad vært med på å smøre krigsmaskineriet i Afghanistan. Forsøket brøt sammen, og dermed rullet Taliban-offensiven i gang.

Taliban-trusselen mot stabiliteten i Sentral-Asia er for det meste gått ubemerkt hen. Terrorister og andre militante som sverger til væpnet kamp mot regjeringene i praktisk tatt hvert eneste av nabolandene, har funnet ly hos Taliban. Et færlig biprodukt er også den kriminelle økonomien med spredning av våpen og narkotika over store deler av regionen.

Talibans åpne dør

Slik lyder konklusjonen til Afghanistan-spesialisten Ahmed Rashid, som en tid har drevet journalistisk gravearbeid på begge sider av fronten, samt i enkelte naboland. «Talibans åpne dør for terrorister og militante av alle avskyngninger er en trussel mot en rekke regimer i Sentral-Asia, og også mot Pakistan og Kina, skriver han i Far Eastern Economic Review».

Taliban-militsen trådte for første gang frem på arenaen for fem år siden, rekruttert fra ultrareligiøse skoler med Koranen som eneste pensum. Den hadde som mål å få slutt på ufreden som herjet landet også etter at islamske motstandsgrupper hadde styrtet kommunistregimet.

Med sine sorte turbancer og religiøse glødgikk «koran-krigerne» sin setersgang over landet og tok regjeringsmakten i Kabul for

tre år siden. Men de gamle mujaheddin-fraksjonene ville ikke gi seg. Krigen gikk videre, stadig videre. Men Afghanistan-konflikten har skiftet karakter:

Regional styrkeprøve

I 1980-årene ble landet arena for et storpolitisk oppgjør mellom supermaktene Sovjetunionen og USA. For en stor del ble det kriget ved hjelp av stedfortredere. I 1990-årene har krigen mer hatt preg av en styrkeprøve mellom regionale makter - stadig med stedfortredere.

Med sin ferske undersøkende journalistikk i bakhånden har Ahmed Rashid dette å berette om den regionale konflikten akkurat nå:

Taliban-militsen er for en stor del unge kjempere som har måttet bli for sin uerfarenhet. Regimet har et presserende behov for mer erfaring og garvede krigsmenn til «Profetens hær». Derfor hilser militante islamske aktivister av mange nasjonaliteter velkommen til å hjelpe til ved fronten i Talibans «hellige krig».

Ettersøkte gjester

Osama bin Ladens arabiske «Brigade 055» er den best kjente av de fremmede kampstyrkene. Selv er sjefen blitt berømt og berømt etter at USA har gitt løfte om fem millioner dollar til den som sørger for at amerikanerne får kloa i ham. Men bin Laden er langt fra den eneste av Talibanens gjester som har en pris på sitt hode.

Væpnede opprørere som er anklaget for terroristangrep i Kina, Iran, Usbekistan, Tadjikistan og Pakistan har funnet ly hos Taliban i en slags symbiose: De hjelper Taliban militært, og Taliban lar dem til gjengjeld opprette baser - mer eller mindre åpenlyst - på afghansk grunn.

Noe av det som bekymrer naboene mest

er bin Ladens forsøk på å sy sammen et nettverk med andre militante grupper. Disse er forskjelligartet med hver sine mål, og tar i første rekke sikte på å underminere hjemlige regimer. Noen av dem deler også bin Ladens iver etter å få i stand en global islamsk revolusjon.

«Min fiendes fiende er min venn»

Hvorfor hjelper Taliban grupper som mange andre ser på med skrekk og gru? I enkelte tilfelle finner man her en enkel logikk: Min fiendes fiende er min venn. Slik er det også med flere land, for eksempel Iran og Usbekistan, som yter aktiv støtte til Masood og hans motstandsallianse.

Iran var lenge de islamske fundamentalistenes fremste bastion, men ser nå på superfundamentalistene i Kabul med dårlig skjult raseri. I fjor var det nær kommet til krig da Taliban etter erobringen av Mazar-e-Sharif tok livet av ni iranske diplomater - samt tusener av andre shia-muslimske fanger.

«Den endelige sannhet»

Taliban er svært utilfreds med at verdenssamfunnet ikke har villet godta deres regime, som bare er anerkjent av Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia og Emirat-unionen. Taliban-lederne trøster seg med troen på at deres strenge fortolkning av islam er den endelige sannhet, med en iboende kraft til å utløse en bølge av islamsk revolusjon rundt om i regionen. Jo flere militante bevegelser som søker tilflukt i Talibanland, jo fastere blir de i troen, skriver Ahmed Rashid. Han siterer Talibanens informasjonsminister, mullah Amir Khan Mullaqi:

- Vår prestisje brer seg nå over hele regionen fordi vi virkelig følger islams lære. Dette gjør amerikanerne og noen av våre naboer svært nervøse...

FN og Afghanistan

Verdensorganisasjonen, den maktfulle, troverdige, og betydningsfulle FN, er i en vanskelig situasjon. Den har en stor oppgave som den var en gang. Men den har blitt litt...

Hilfer hadde okkupert store deler av landet. Det var en katastrofe for de som ble tvunget til å flykte. Det var en katastrofe for de som ble tvunget til å flykte. Det var en katastrofe for de som ble tvunget til å flykte.



TALIBAN: Taliban-leider Osama bin Laden og andre ledere i Afghanistan. (Foto: AP)

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AFGHANISTAN

Taliban-leider på besøk i Norge

– Vårt styre er et resultat av folkets frigjøringskamp

■ SIGURD F. HANKESEN

– Hvis det er fred i en finger, må det være fred i alle fingre, og det er det som er vår filosofi. Vi har ikke noe mål, vi har bare en filosofi. Vi har ikke noe mål, vi har bare en filosofi. Vi har ikke noe mål, vi har bare en filosofi.

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Taliban-leider Mohammad Jawad i regjering og trosser og Karl Johan. Han er i Norge i forbindelse med et UNDP-oppdrag om utvikling og økonomi. (Foto: Arne Ove Bergo)

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Taliban-offensiv

12/8-99

Talibans sommeroffensiv mot opposisjonstyrkene har sendt tusenvis av sivile på flukt, midt i innhøstingen. Avlingene i Kabuls korn- og fruktlagre kan bli ødelagt, og det kan bety sult til vinteren, frykter Kirkens Nødhjelp.

Taliban iverksatte onsdag morgen en ny offensiv mot opposisjonens stillinger nord for Kabul, ifølge nyhetsbyrået AFP.

Øyenvitner i hovedstaden fortalte om voldsomme sammenstøt på Shomali-sletta, 25 kilometer nord for Kabul, der Taliban-militansen åpenbart forsøkte å bryte gjennom linjene til motstanderen. Kampene varte i fire timer med artilleri, bombekastere og granater,

og var de første tunge sammenstøtene siden styrkene til Ahmad Shah Masood i forrige uke slo tilbake og gjenerobret flere byer som Taliban tok noen dager før.

Nord-alliansen til Masood er den siste styrken av betydning som Taliban ennå ikke har beseiret. Den fundamentalistiske militsen kontrollerer over 90 prosent av Afghanistan, men Nord-alliansen har fortsatt kontroll over to provinser i nordøst og Pansjir-dalen, 80 kilometer nord for Kabul.

Kornlagre

Ifølge både Kirkens Nødhjelp Kabul-medarbeider Torild Borud og Afghanistankomiteens stedlige representant i Peshawar, Odd

Bratlie, kan offensiven true de viktige korn- og fruktlagrene i Shomali-området.

Det er sesong for innhøsting, men kampene har tvunget tusenvis på flukt. I verste fall blir avlingene ødelagt, og det vil i så fall få svært alvorlige konsekvenser for Kabul, som er avhengig av korn og frukt fra dette området, forteller Torild Borud, som jobber i Peshawar og Kabul.

Flyktningestrømmen fra områdene er også alvorlig, selv om man ennå ikke har klart å kartlegge omfanget av den. Taliban har selv tvangsflyttet et større antall mennesker av såkalte sikkerhetshensyn.

Tvangsflyttingen har nok

skjedd fordi Taliban vil forhindre Masood i få støtte fra lokalbefolkningen, slik det har skjedd under tidligere offensiver. Yngre menn er blitt skilt fra kvinner og barn og plassert i interneringsleire, opplyser Bratlie, som understreker at dette er annenhånds opplysninger.

Vi har fått høre at rundt 8.000 kvinner, barn og eldre har blitt fraktet til Jalalabad sør i Afghanistan, for deretter å bli kjørt opp til Kabul igjen, forteller Bratlie.

Overfylt

Borud bekrefter at hun har hørt om et konkret eksempel der 52 mennesker har presset seg sammen i ett hus. Flyktningestrømmen til Kabul har vært stor. En-

kelle bydder har fått økt sin befolkning med rundt 75 prosent. Det sier seg selv at dette er en enorm belastning for sivilbefolkningen, som fra før hadde små ressurser, sier Borud.

Borud forteller at Taliban i lengre tid har forberedt offensiven mot den gjenstridige Masood. Etter at Taliban ble drevet tilbake, har Taliban's åndelige leder oppfordret moskeene og de religiøse lærestedene rundt om i landet til å verve nye soldater.

Men jeg har ikke noe tro på at noen kan vinne denne krigen. Fjellområdene det kjempes i er skapt for geriljakrig, og Masoods folk overgir seg ikke frivillig, fastslår KN-medarbeideren. NTB

Evig krig - og terror

Taliban-regimet i Afghanistan har innledet ny storoffensiv mot den urokkelige «Løven av Pansjir» (Ahmad Shah Masood). Samtidig styrkes kontakten med «Verdens verste terrorist» (Osama bin Laden).

Taliban har forsøkt å påstå at bin Laden for lengst har forlatt Afghanistan. Men Jason Burke fra The Observer har selv vært i nærheten av hans nye tilholdssted sør for Jalalabad.

Bin Laden skal dessuten ofte være på besøk hos Taliban i dobbelt forestand enoyde leder, muligheten Omar, som bor tilbake trukket i Kandahar - et stort, nytt hus bygd til ham av bin Laden.

Da vil amerikanerne på ny sende raketter mot anstøt bin Laden-baser i Afghanistan, slik de gjorde etter at USA's ambassader i Kenya og Tanzania ble torbommet i fjor og over 250 tilfældige mennesker ble drept.

Dermed vinner enda en gang håpet om fred for det evig krigerfulde afghanske folk. Fredsforhandlinger nylig i Tasjkent endte uten resultat - og det er bare et udsagnsmål når bin Laden står til med nye terrorhandlinger.

Effektive fliske

Terroristlederen arvet nesten halvannen milliard kroner etter faren, som ble styrtet i byggebransjen i Saudi-Arabia. Derfor har bin Laden god anledning til å begå gode vinner med hus. I tillegg til å finansiere global terror.

Blodig jubileum

Lordag er etårsdagen for ambassade-bombingen, og FBI venter at bin Laden vil markere jubileet med nye blodige aksjoner. FBI har innstilt alle turistbesøk i sitt hovedkvarter i Washington, og i juni ble fem amerikanske ambassader stengt for å få gjennomført grundig sikkerhetskontroll.

Taliban arresterer flyktninger

KABUL: Taliban-militsen har arrestert tusenvis av mennesker som har flyktet til Kabul fra landsbyer som militsen har okkupert nord for den afghanske hovedstaden. Taliban sier at bevegelsen bare pågriper noen få kriminelle.

FN advarte søndag mot en humanitær katastrofe i Afghanistan etter at Taliban brenner hele landsbyer og ødelegger livsgrunnlaget for mange tusen mennesker i Shomali-regionen, et område som har vært under kontroll av Taliban motstandere. (NTB-AFP) Vært Land

USA har utlovet en belønning på nesten 12 millioner kroner til den som uskadeliggjør bin Laden. I tillegg kan Taliban bli fristet til å kvitte seg med den politiske beinstuhgen ved å ha superterroristen hos seg.

Bare tre land, alle muslimske, har anerkjent Taliban, fortsatt kritiserer for kvinneverktykkelse og grusomme straffer. Som bevis på politikkens nulltoleranse ble nylig avhuggede hender utstilt til allmenn beskuelse.

Men for å få nødljelp har Taliban lempet litt på forbudet mot at kvinner arbeider utenfor hjemmet, og lovet å gjenopne pleskolene når «passende» lag er blitt fastlagt. Og uten bin Laden vil Taliban kanskje kunne bli spisselig selv for USA...

ONSDAG 4. AUGUST 1999

Isse i hollig

Bruket, som kalles Farnihadda, har for lengst forfalt, og bolighusene er sparsomt bebygget, medregnet det som bin Ladens tre husrunder skal ha flyttet til.

45-årige bin Laden har selv alltid skyldt luksu, og alt ter helst på en liten skammel isidene for å slunge seg i hauger av afghanske tepper og puter. Tidligere gjennomførte han også et hardt treningsprogram, med gymnastiske øvelser og rideturer.

Siden er alle afghanere blitt utrensket, slik at livvakten består nesten bare av utvalgte, arabiske gerilljaveveteraner. De posteres i ringvern rundt Farnihadda, innenfor et ringvern bemannet av Taliban.

Dobbelte riller

Siden er alle afghanere blitt utrensket, slik at livvakten består nesten bare av utvalgte, arabiske gerilljaveveteraner. De posteres i ringvern rundt Farnihadda, innenfor et ringvern bemannet av Taliban.

AFGHANISTAN Huvudstadsbladet
Hårda strider nära Kabul

■ Tiotals människor dödades eller skadades i Afghanistan när de styrande talibanernas styrkor och oppositionens trupper natten till fredagen besköt varandra med tungt artilleri strax norr om huvudstaden Kabul.

Läkare och militära befälhavare vid fronten berättade i går att över 2 000 människor under natten flytt från stridsområdet och sökt sig till Kabul. Talibanska officerare beskyllde också oppositionsstyrkorna för att medvetet ha beskjutit byn Shakardara inte långt från huvudstaden.

De norra delarna av Kabul har under den gångna veckan träffats av flera granater. En del har slagit ner nära den kombinerade militär- och civilflygplatsen. Men i onsdags träffades ett ammunitionsupplag på en militärbas i Khari Khanakvarteren i Kabul varvid ett barn miste livet och åtta andra skadades. 8/5-99

KABUL/AP

AFGHANISTAN Huvudstadsbladet
Anklagelser mot Iran 18/5-99

■ Afghanistans styrande talibanregim anklagade i går Iran för att ha beskjutit Afghanistans gränsprovinser.

Diplomater vid den afghanska ambassaden i grannlandet Pakistan uppgav att iranska trupper i helgen avlossat tiotals granater från tungt artilleri mot provinserna Farah och Herat i västra delen av landet. Iranska soldater ska också ha trängt in på afghanskt territorium.

Enligt talibanerna började beskjutningen sedan talibanerna i förra veckan erövrat Bamiyanprovinsen, där den afghanska shiitiska oppositionsgruppen Hizb-i-wahadat har sitt starkaste fäste. Enligt talibanerna backas Hizb-i-wahadat kraftigt upp av Iran.

- Tills vidare har vi inte skjutit tillbaka, sade en talibantalesman

Det fanns inga rapporter om personskador eller materiella skador och heller inga iranska kommentarer.

ISLAMABAD/AP

Engelsk press Waiting for a last battle with the Taliban

Observer 990627

Jason Burke travels through Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley to meet a guerrilla hero who yearns for peace

SITTING on their tank in the ruins of a royal summer palace, the fighters eat cherries and yoghurt, listening to the dull thud of artillery on the frontline.

Abdul Hakim, Mohammed Djaffar and Mohammed Shah have been pulled back from their bunkers and trenches to take cover from the bombardment. They listen for the pause in the barrage that will signal the coming of the Taliban.

Fifty miles to the north, among the rugged valleys and scree-strewn peaks of the Hindu Kush mountain range, other men are waiting too. They are the senior officers of the loose alliance of factions

that now comprises the only opposition to the Taliban — the extremist regime that controls around 80 per cent of Afghanistan.

Their leader is Ahmed Shah Massood, the legendary guerrilla commander whose tactical brilliance and acute political mind made him the most effective, and best known, of the Mujahideen who fought the Soviet occupation 20 years ago. The Russians tried, unsuccessfully, to storm the Panjshir valley — his home and base — half a dozen times. Now the Taliban hope to succeed where the Soviet Army failed.

Last week Massood was back in the Panjshir, staying

at his mud-and-brick home in the village of Jangalak where he was born. He knows the time for preparation is nearly over and that this year's fighting will start in earnest very soon. His days are a flurry of hurried meetings with the men who will lead his 20,000-strong army into battle when the Taliban attack comes.

Massood, however, is confident his troops will repel the Taliban. 'We know they will come soon,' he told *The Ob-*

server in a rare interview last week. 'But, with God's help, they will cause us few problems.'

His position is unenviable. After five years of battling the Islamic militia he now faces

them practically alone. Last year the Taliban swept through much of central and northern Afghanistan, shattering the opposition alliance. Many opposition leaders fled overseas leaving the remnants of their forces to join

Massood in his mountain fastness in the far North East.

With nowhere left to run, Massood's margin for error is very thin. A single, serious defeat could see him, and resistance to the Taliban, finished forever.

Massood, who is 46, has had his back to the wall before. He has been fighting for 24 years, almost always against massive odds. The story of how he forged an almost unbeatable army from a band of a dozen fugitives living on mulberries

is known throughout the region. The heavy losses his lightly armed troops inflicted on the Soviet forces earned him a reputation as one of the greatest guerrilla commanders ever. But now he is tired.

His sharp brown eyes are weary and grey flecks his thick black hair. He seems less the wily fighting fox and more the cornered stag.

'We don't want a war and we would be happy with peace. I am looking forward to the years when I do not have to fight,' he said, sitting in the library in his father-in-law's house in the village of Bazarak, less than a mile from his own home.

The shelves are lined with books of military strategy and political analysis. There are a dozen books of Afghan history as well as biographies of Stalin and Alexander the

Great. Other works are on architecture — Massood trained as an architect before leading a revolt against the Soviet-backed Marxist regime in Afghanistan in 1977.

He claims he is only fighting to force the Taliban to the negotiating table. 'We are ready to talk,' he said. 'We don't want to rule the country. We just want a representative government for all Afghans.'

And there lies the rub. Few in Afghanistan's history have ever been able to claim universal support. Massood's men are predominantly from ethnic and religious minorities. They are of Tajik, Uzbek or Mongol descent and largely Shia Muslim.

For centuries the Shias have fought with the majority, Sunni, Pathan tribes of the South and East. It is from these tribes that the Taliban draw most of their support.

In recent years that enmity has been deepened both by atrocities on both sides and, most significantly, by the meddling of overseas powers. All the countries bordering Afghanistan, and others further afield, are pushing their own candidates in the war.

The Taliban owes much of its success to military support from Pakistan and financial aid from Saudi Arabia, both Sunni Muslim countries. Though relationships with the Saudis have chilled recently — not least because of the Taliban government's refusal to hand over Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi dissident and alleged master terrorist — private donations continue to pour in.

Massood claims scores of Pakistani Army officers are acting as military advisers to the Taliban. The Pakistan government has certainly done nothing to stop tens of thousands of young Paki-

stanis from joining the movement as foot soldiers.

At least 2,000 Pakistanis, along with an unknown number of Arab militants, are believed to have been massed by Taliban commanders on the strategically critical Shomali plains — an 80-mile long stretch of fields and orchards that commands both the northern approaches to Kabul and the entrance to the Panjshir. It is here that, within weeks, the showdown between Massood's weary fighters and the young *ghazis* (holy warriors) of the Taliban will come.

Massood gets angry when talking of the Pakistani involvement in Afghanistan. His fist thumps the wooden table — bare except for a pen and a notepad for writing orders — for emphasis. 'They are trying to turn us into a colony,' he says. 'Without them there would be no war.'

But he is being slightly disingenuous. His own troops carry weapons supplied by Russia, several of the newly independent CIS republics and from Shia Muslim Iran. Though Massood claims he pays for everything, it seems unlikely the income from his lapis lazuli mines or from taxes levied on the country's tottering economy is enough to buy the rows of recently acquired tanks and multiple barrelled rocket-launchers to be seen along the roadsides of the Shomali plains or the Panjshir — at least not at their full market price.

With almost every diplomat from Istanbul to Delhi terrified by the prospect of the Taliban spreading beyond the borders of Afghanistan, Massood's envoys have not found it hard to drum up support. There are even reports that the Americans have recently been in touch for the first time for nearly a decade.

Yet there is no doubt who suffers in the end. Last week the criss-crossed vapour trails of MiG jets hung once again over the Panjshir valley. The bombs the Taliban planes dropped — to soften up resistance before the big offensive — destroyed a few more homes and a few more lives.

In Bazarak, a village of 400 families, 500 people were killed during the war against the Russians and 500 have been killed since. A group of 15-year-olds recently joined the front to fight for Massood. Their commander, who was 19 when he picked up his hunting rifle to fight in 1979, welcomed them sadly into his unit. 'We have lost our young generation,' he said. 'They have no homes, no schooling, nothing. They have just grown up with war.'

Living with the Taliban

KABUL

Economist 24/7-99

This week's peace talks may not avert a major offensive by the Taliban, even though their grip on Afghanistan already seems complete

THE Taliban are fearsome fundamentalist zealots. This is what much of the world believes. Even many of the 1.2m Afghan refugees living in Pakistan are wary of returning because of the Taliban's harsh Islamic rule. Their strict edicts are well known: beards for men, for women a life in the home (or under cover of their *burqas*, should they go out) and the banning of music and television. In the capital, Kabul, however, there appears to be universal acceptance of Taliban rule—and far fewer complaints.

It is not hard to understand why. For most residents, the period before September 26th 1996, when the Taliban marched into Kabul, had been a nightmare. After the fall of the Soviet-backed government in April 1992, the capital became a new battlefield for the various groups of mujahideen (Islamic guerrillas) who had been vying for control since the withdrawal of the Soviet army in February 1989. As different factions carved up the capital, looting and violence took hold.

The country at large was no safer. The drive from Kabul to Jalalabad, near the Pakistani border, was an expensive trip, as different mujahideen groups demanded hefty tolls in exchange for protection from armed bandits. Today the journey, although longer because of damaged roads, is safe. The Taliban officials now on the checkpoints are uninterested in extortion.

In Kabul, the Taliban have been trying to set about reconstruction. A start has been made on a digital telephone system to connect Afghanistan with the outside world. There are plans for a mobile-telephone network. Even the traffic lights are working. Traffic wardens—resplendent in communist-era uniforms—manage to control Kabul's manic drivers, except for the Kalashnikov-toting officials who speed around in black pick-ups, exempt from traffic laws.

The Taliban are also trying to get on better with some of the aid agencies. After a recent attack on Red Cross staff, the leaders issued a decree imposing a five-year prison term for anyone threatening the

safety of foreign workers. And the authorities are starting to become a bit less inflexible about women. Under some conditions they now allow Afghan women to work with the aid agencies. They have also promised to reopen girls' schools, once an "appropriate" curriculum is drawn up.

But there is little else to cheer. The streets may be safe, but, in the words of one resident, it is "like having good security in a prison". Anyone who breaks the law is dealt with severely by the religious police, the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Amputated hands were recently publicly displayed to show the Taliban's brand of zero-tolerance policing.

Once a cosmopolitan city, Kabul now offers its residents little in the way of amusement beyond the Taliban-run radio, which transmits Koranic verses, or a bizarre motorcycle "wall of death". Even some of the Taliban find things dull. Almost the most exciting thing they can do is to visit the only hotel in the city, sneak out a camera from under their long tunics (photography is also banned) and pose for a snap.

The Taliban's grip on Kabul is all the tighter because they are ill at ease in the capital. Mullah Mohammad Omar, the leader of the movement, lives in Kandahar, in south Afghanistan, the de facto capital. Most Taliban leaders and their supporters are southern Pathans, largely from the provinces around Kandahar. For them, Kabul, with its large Persian-speaking Tajik and Hazara community, comes as a culture shock.

The Taliban have tried to broaden their appeal by appointing ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks as governors of northern provinces. In April, opposition forces managed to take Bamiyan, in central Afghanistan, cutting off the Taliban's supply route to the north-west. Although the Taliban recaptured Bamiyan in May, their hold on the city is tenuous, because of the animosity between the local Hazaras, who are mostly Shia Muslims, and the Sunni Taliban. Such divisions are played upon by the anti-Taliban alliance, which blamed the movement for massacres of ethnic minorities in Bamiyan and in Mazar-i-Sharif last year. The Taliban, it says, are not fighting for a united Afghanistan.

Nor, however, is the opposition doing much to unite the country. The alliance is racked by internal divisions, and each faction seems to be backed by a neighbouring power intent on creating its own sphere of influence in Afghanistan. Shia Iran, mindful of a hostile Sunni Taliban as a neighbour and increasingly weary of the flow of drugs and refugees across its border, is hoping that its support for the alliance will improve its relations with Central Asia. Some Central Asian states, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, have joined Afghanistan's proxy war by



backing the Uzbek and Tajik factions. Continued resistance to the Taliban also suits Russia. It fears an all-out Taliban victory could encourage fundamentalists in Central Asia.

Foreign meddling makes it all the more difficult to end the war. Nevertheless, the Taliban held talks with the alliance in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, this week. The Taliban, who control almost 90% of the country, are said to be preparing for a big offensive against forces loyal to Ahmad Shah Masoud, who controls the north-eastern provinces and the strategic Panjshir valley. The talks ended without much progress, but at least the ideas of a ceasefire, an exchange of prisoners and further negotiations were left on the table.

The Taliban may yet prove intransigent.

But if so, they risk annoying the Pakistani government, their main backer, which is now squeezed from two sides. At home, it faces criticism from its own Islamic militants, angry at the humiliating withdrawal of Pakistani-backed fighters from Kashmir (see box). Abroad, it is under pressure from America to get the Taliban to extradite Osama bin Laden, the man the Americans say was behind the bombing of two American embassies in Africa last year. Angry that Mr bin Laden is given sanctuary in Afghanistan, the Americans have imposed sanctions on the Taliban.

That does nothing to make life easier for ordinary Afghans. Without peace, the economy is moribund. The Taliban have opened some factories, but admit that without foreign investment prospects remain dim. The country may be awash with banknotes, but they are almost worthless. In the Kabul currency market, \$1 buys 42,000 Afghanis. In the early 1990s it would have bought about 50 notes. The Taliban blame the opposition for printing them. But beyond making accusations, they are uninterested in sorting out the mess, for now at least. According to Mawlawi Ahmad Jan, the Taliban industry minister, the economy, along with schools and hospitals, can be attended to only when "the fighting stops and the Taliban are recognised." For the poor Afghans, that still seems a distant prospect.

AFGHANISTAN

Heart of Darkness

As the Taliban launch a new offensive against opposition forces, the threat which this Islamic regime poses to regional stability has gone unnoticed. Terrorists fighting the governments of virtually every Central Asian power find shelter with the Taliban. An equally dangerous by-product is the criminal economy supported by the Taliban, which spreads weapons and drugs throughout the region.

By Ahmed Rashid in Kabul and Faizabad



Soviet-made tanks and armoured personnel carriers spew clouds of black diesel fumes as they lumber up the potholed road north from Kabul. The Taliban are on the move, preparing for what they hope will be a final drive to bring the last 20% of Afghanistan under their control.

Travelling with them in convoys of Toyota pick-up trucks are about 400 Arab Islamic militants from a dozen Middle East and African countries. These are the fighters of the 055 Brigade, funded by alleged Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden.

When a reporter heads down the road in hopes of catching up with the Arabs, it is Pakistani militants at a checkpoint who block his way, waving their Kalashnikovs persuasively.

Desperate for manpower and moral support, the Taliban have wel-

comed Islamic militants of diverse nationalities to join them on the front lines. Bin Laden and his brigade may be the best-known since the United States accused him of masterminding the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa and offered \$5 million for his capture. But bin Laden is far from the only Taliban guest with a price on his head. The REVIEW has learned that armed insurgents accused of terrorist attacks in China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan have found sanctuary in a symbiotic relationship with the Taliban: They help the Taliban militarily; the Taliban let them set up bases on Afghan soil.

And in a worrying development, bin Laden has been working to establish ties with his fellow militant groups and may be helping to fund some of them, diplomats in the region say. The diverse groups have their own agendas, mainly focused on undermining the regimes at home, but some share bin Laden's zeal for a global Islamic revolution. The resulting web of dangerous friendships threatens to export instability throughout the mineral-rich and commercially under-exploited hinterland of Central Asia.

The expatriate fighters who join up with the Taliban find not only a haven but

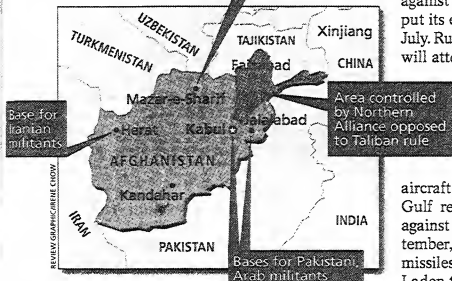


a source of income—trafficking in Afghan heroin and smuggling consumer goods through Afghanistan. Drugs and smuggling—pillars of Afghanistan's war economy—now threaten to undermine legitimate economies throughout the region (see story on page 10).

Why do the Taliban help them? In some instances, it's simple logic: The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Iran and Uzbekistan give military support to the Northern Alliance, which still holds Afghanistan's United Nations seat and is the last organized opposition to the Taliban.

The Taliban are also deeply frustrated by the refusal of the international community to accept their government—only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have recognized the Taliban. Increasingly,

Base for Uzbek and Chinese Uighur militants



many Taliban leaders comfort themselves with the belief that their strict interpretation of Islam is the ultimate truth, capable of unleashing a wave of Islamic revolution across the region. The more militant movements flock to them for sanctuary, the more justified the Taliban are in this view.

"Our prestige is spreading across the region because we have truly implemented Islam and this makes the Americans and some neighbours very nervous," says

Taliban Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttqi.

But their dangerous liaisons are costing the Taliban dearly. On July 6, Washington imposed economic sanctions on Afghanistan, barring Americans from trading with or investing in the country. It was a step short of declaring the Taliban a terrorist movement, which the White House reportedly favours. The State Department pre-

fers to keep up a dialogue in hopes that it can eventually extradite bin Laden, whose exact whereabouts is known to only a few Taliban leaders.

In interviews with the REVIEW, Taliban officials showed no sign of softening. "Bin Laden is our guest and there is no proof he is involved in terrorism," Muttqi says. "Clinton is just hounding bin Laden and the Taliban to cover up his own inadequacies and failings."

Another U.S.-bin Laden confrontation may be looming. U.S. diplomatic sources say surveillance of bin Laden's worldwide alliance of fundamentalist militants, Al Qaeda or "The Base," picked up signals that he may be planning a strike against a U.S. target. Washington put its embassies on alert in early July. Rumours abound that the U.S. will attempt a pre-emptive strike.

Some say a U.S. commando group has arrived in Peshawar in northern Pakistan and is preparing to grab him, others that a U.S. aircraft carrier is in the Persian Gulf ready to launch air strikes against his hideout. Last September, the U.S. launched 70 cruise missiles against suspected bin Laden training camps close to the city of Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan; he escaped harm.

The Taliban just laugh at Washington's demonization of one individual. "What will the Americans do even if they find bin Laden?" asks an officer of the Taliban intelligence service. "There are hundreds of bin Ladens just up the road."

Many members of bin Laden's 055 Brigade fought individually with the Taliban for years. But it was only after the Saudi was introduced to the Taliban in 1996 that he pulled his fellow Arabs together to form a force with a much larger agenda: not just to put the Taliban in power in Afghanistan, but to support fundamentalist Islamic uprisings across the region. The 055 Brigade—which includes hundreds of wanted terrorists who have fled governments from Algeria to Egypt and Kenya—gained prominence last year when

What will the Americans do even if they find Osama bin Laden? There are hundreds of bin Ladens just up the road

Taliban intelligence officer

it helped the Taliban take the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif from the Northern Alliance.

Bin Laden's brigade is the best financed and organized of all the expatriate militant groups in Afghanistan. But he is suspected of providing aid also to militants fighting Uzbekistan's authoritarian President Islam Karimov and to Uighurs fighting Beijing's rule in their homeland, the western Chinese region of Xinjiang.

When six bombs exploded in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent in February, the Uzbekistan government said it was an assassination attempt on Karimov by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or IMU, an armed underground group. Instead, 16 other people were killed and 128 wounded. Uzbek officials and Asian diplomats in Tashkent say that the IMU's leader, Tahir Yoldasev, subsequently fled to Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, the base of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar.

In interviews, Taliban officials deny they are helping the IMU. But a senior political aide to former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Northern Alliance, says the Taliban gave Yoldasev a house in Kandahar, then in May let him set up a military training camp in Taliban-controlled Mazar-e-Sharif, just a few miles from the Uzbekistan border. "Yoldasev is training 200 to 300 militants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kirgystan and Uighurs from Xinjiang province in China," says the aide. (The Tajiks are militant Muslims who rejected a 1997 ceasefire agreement with Tajikistan's neo-communist government.)

Western diplomats in Islamabad say they believe Yoldasev is financing his

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operations through the Afghan drug trade. On June 2, Uzbek Foreign Minister Aziz Kamilov held talks for the first time with Mullah Omar in Kandahar and asked for Yoldasev's extradition. "Omar flatly refused to do so and said he is a guest of the Taliban," says an Asian diplomat in Tashkent. Several hundred other IMU militants have fled to Russia, Tajikistan and Turkey to escape Karimov's crackdown and are expected to turn up in Mazar.

Iran's Shia regime is also feeling threatened by the Sunni Taliban, who killed nine Iranian diplomats in Mazar last year. Australian journalists who visited Kandahar last year interviewed members of the Ahl-e-Sunnah Wal Jamaat, a small and little-known group of Sunni Iranians that is trying to overthrow the Teheran government. Iranian diplomats say the Taliban subsequently moved the group to Herat on the Afghanistan-Iran border, with the aim of carrying out sabotage inside Iran.

More worrisome to Teheran are reports that leaders of the main Iranian opposition group, the Iraqi-backed Mujahideen-e-Khalq, have frequently visited Kandahar and asked the Taliban for an operational base. So far there is no sign that the Taliban have accommodated them. But in a statement issued last September that did not name any specific group, the Taliban bragged: "Afghanistan is capable of harbouring opponents of the Iranian government inside Afghan territory and thus to create problems for Iran."

China is also affected. Beijing shunned involvement in Afghanistan's civil war until February, when the first Chinese delegation arrived in Kabul for talks with the Taliban. At the time, Chinese

officials said that their concern was to stem the tide of heroin from Afghanistan into Xinjiang. But more is at stake: The heroin traffic is helping fund anti-Chinese Islamic and nationalist movements among the Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. Uighur militants have trained and fought

Wages of War

By Ahmed Rashid in Faizabad and Kabul



The ethnic-Tajik soldier sits on his haunches to tell his story. Now 32, he's been fighting since age 17 and has taken part in 20 major battles. Now he's in Faizabad with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, preparing to face yet another attack. "The war has destroyed the country, the people and our traditions," he says. "We just want peace, even the fighters."

The soldier is taking part in an extraordinary in-depth survey on war that the International Committee of the Red Cross, or ICRC, is conducting in Afghanistan and 12 other war zones. The project marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Conventions in 1949, which attempted to set humane limits on the conduct of war.

But in Afghanistan there have been no limits to the suffering and the main casualties have been civilians. In the ICRC's interviews with combatants and civilians, men and women, the verdict is unanimous. Two decades of fighting have left the population with an overwhelming war weariness.

Much of the despair relates to the total destruction of a normal economy. In its place has grown up a criminal economy based on drugs and smuggling, which has proven so lucrative for Afghanistan's war-

lords that they have little incentive to try to restore the country's shattered agriculture or industry. Afghanistan's illegal exports are slowly undermining legitimate economic activity in neighbouring Pakistan and Central Asia.

"Afghanistan has become the world's largest opium producer and a centre of arms dealing, and supports a multibillion-dollar trade in smuggled goods," says Barnett Rubin, a leading American scholar on Afghanistan who is based at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. "This criminalized economy funds both the Taliban and their adversaries, and has transformed social relations and weakened states and legal economies throughout the region."

Taliban ministers say Afghanistan has just six working factories—all owned by the Taliban—compared to 220 before the Soviet Union invaded in 1979. A seventh, also Taliban-owned, shut down recently. Its 200 workers made soap and rubber shoes for sale to Western aid agencies in Kabul. But now most agencies have pulled out because of terrorist threats and reduced funding from donor countries.

In place of industry, the twin pillars of Afghanistan's economy are drugs and smuggling. In the Helmand River valley

REUTERS



Osama bin Laden, who is based in Afghanistan, has formed links there with militants from across Asia.

south of Kandahar, poppy fields that produce opium stretch as far as the horizon. The Taliban encourage farmers to import fertilizer from Pakistan and rebuild irrigation networks for better yields. In western Afghanistan at Herat, the Taliban have set up model poppy farms where farmers can learn the best methods of cultivation. Wheat, formerly Afghanistan's staple crop, no longer holds any appeal: Foodstuffs can be imported more cheaply from Pakistan.

Drug traffickers also operate Afghanistan's only banking system, offering farmers credit in advance for their poppy crop to see them through the long winter months.

The United Nations Drug Control Programme says that 96% of the 2,100 metric tonnes of opium produced in Afghanistan last year was grown in Taliban-controlled areas. The Taliban say they will end poppy cultivation if UN agencies provide seed and other support for alternative crops.

Meanwhile the Taliban impose a 20%

with fellow Islamic guerrillas in Afghanistan since 1986 and Chinese officials say the arms and explosives the Uighurs are using against Chinese security forces come from Afghanistan.

Taliban officials say they have assured China they are not harbouring Uighurs. A Taliban deputy minister visited Beijing in mid-July to discuss Chinese construction of a cement plant in Kandahar. However, Western diplomats in Islamabad say the Uighurs have ties to Yoldasev and bin Laden, if not directly to the Taliban.

Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban is complex and fraught with severe repercussions for Islamabad. Mainstream Pakistani Islamic parties jostle for strategic alliances with the Taliban. Between 3,000 and 5,000 Pakistanis belonging to a dozen different Islamic fundamentalist parties are in Kabul with Islamabad's blessing for the

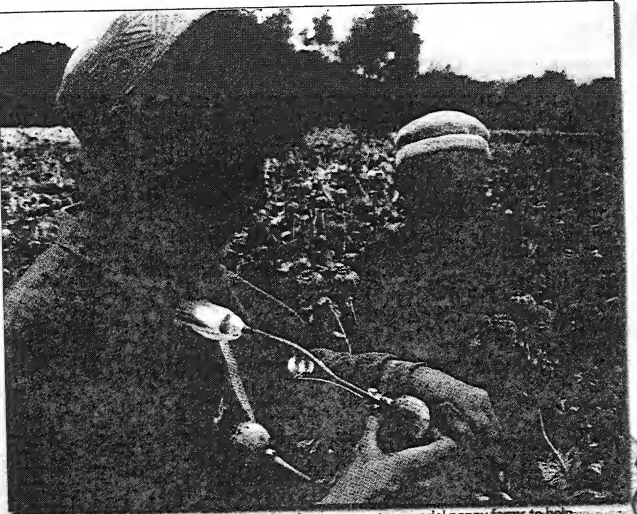
tax on dealers, which goes straight to their war chest. Opium and its end product, heroin, are a major source of income for all the Afghan warlords. The Northern Alliance, which controls the northeast region, taxes opium shipments crossing into Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Officials in Chifra and Uzbekistan say that drugs from Afghanistan also help fund Islamic insurgencies within their borders. Uzbekistan says one trafficking route passes through its Ferghana Valley—where the rebel Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is based—and on to Moscow and the West.

Drug addiction has increased along the transit routes. UN officials say Pakistan now has 5 million heroin addicts, against virtually none in 1980; Iran has 3 million and China has 1 million, many in the western region of Xinjiang which abuts Afghanistan.

Drugs are far from Afghanistan's only contraband. From ancient times Afghanistan has been a hub for cross-Asian trade; portions of the old silk route traversed its valleys. Now thousands of brightly painted Pakistan-made trucks grind daily over potholed roads and badly mended bridges, carrying cheap refrigerators and tires from Russia, petroleum from Iran and foodstuffs from Pakistan. Virtually everything is smuggled. Except for fuel and foodstuffs, little stays within Afghanistan.

Under international law, Pakistan must allow landlocked Afghanistan to import and export goods duty-free through Karachi. The goods should only transit



The crop of choice in Afghanistan: The Taliban have even set up model poppy farms to help increase yield.

Pakistan. In practice, however, many are resold in Pakistani bazaars for less than locally made goods, crippling local industry. A senior official of Pakistan's Central Board of Revenue estimates that nearly

‘ This criminalized economy . . . has transformed social relations and weakened states and legal economies throughout the region ’

—Barnett Rubin, Council on Foreign Relations

\$2 billion is lost each year in unpaid import and sales taxes.

A recent World Bank study estimates that \$2.5 billion worth of goods are smuggled between Pakistan and Afghanistan each year, equal to half of Afghanistan's estimated gross domestic product. Official trade between the two countries was just \$48 million in 1997, according to the latest available figure. Pakistani officials wink at the smuggling, in part because everyone from border guards to ministers takes a cut.

The Afghan smuggling routes stretch across the former Soviet republics, Russia and Iran. Recently, the Taliban and other warlords have begun flying in consumer items from the Persian Gulf free port of Dubai and sending opium out on the return flights, UN officials say. The Taliban have just contracted to buy a used Boeing 747 from Kuwait Airlines for \$26 million dollars to expand operations.

The warlords have made little effort to invest in agriculture, industry, education or health. The only development work the Taliban have undertaken is repairing roads and setting up petrol pumps so smuggling can flourish. They have tried to attract foreign investment for oil and gas exploration, road repair and even a cell-phone system, but the ongoing fighting—and now U.S. economic sanctions—has squelched investor interest.

“There is no civil administration and social issues are not being addressed except by the Western relief agencies, but we can't solve the problems of the whole country,” says Marcus Dolder, head of the ICRC delegation in Kabul.

In Kabul's main bazaar, the poorest of the poor who have sold all their other household goods are hawking their mattresses and bedding. They have made the choice to eat now and freeze in the winter. For ordinary civilians, these are the only kind of choices available.

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Taliban summer offensive against the Northern Alliance.

Their leaders have set up receiving centres and offices in the central district of Kabul, which now resembles a Pakistani suburb. Their presence has worrying implications for India-Pakistan relations. Some of these Pakistanis are war veterans from earlier Taliban campaigns and from recent fighting in Kashmir against Indian forces, while others are on summer holiday break from *madrassas* or Islamic schools.

Also in Afghanistan, however, are the leaders of the Sipha-e-Sabaha Pakistan, or the SSP, and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi—extremist Sunni groups accused of killing hundreds of Pakistani Shias and attempting to assassinate Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The leaders have houses in Kabul, while their followers fight for the Taliban. "I can't understand the logic that while the military supports the Taliban, our police in Punjab are trying to hunt down SSP leaders who are actually in Kabul," says a senior adviser to Punjab Chief Minister Shabaz Sharif.

The Taliban have also given sanctuary to fighters from Pakistan's Harakat-ul Mujahideen, who have been linked to bin Laden and whom Washington declared a terrorist group last year for attacks on civilians in Bosnia, Chechnya, Indian-held Kashmir and Tajikistan.

For many Afghans, the crux of the problem is the fall-off of U.S. involvement in the region since the end of the Cold War. From 1994 to 1997 the Clinton administration quietly allowed Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to back the Taliban, seeing it as a convenient foil for Iranian influence in Central Asia. Since last year's attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Washington's only agenda vis-a-vis the Taliban has been to "get bin Laden."

The Washington-based Afghanistan Foundation recently issued a report urging that the U.S. government pursue a broader-based policy to restore peace in Afghanistan. The U.S. "should do more to weaken and transform the Taliban," says the foundation's head, former Republican Congressman Don Ritter, who was a leading supporter of U.S. aid for the Afghan mujahideen fighting the Soviets in the 1980s. "The Taliban must stop hosting

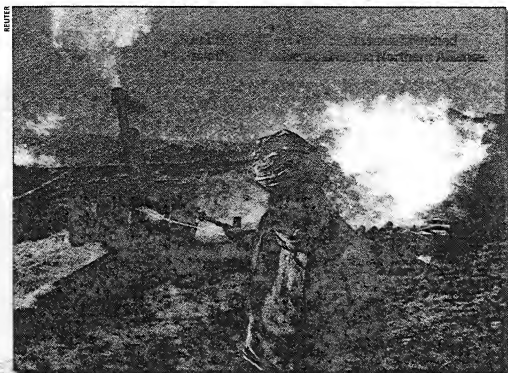
any terrorist groups and close terrorist training camps." The foundation's report suggests that the CIA—which helped arm the mujahideen—should arm Taliban moderates with the aim of overthrowing Mullah Omar, or alternately support a return to power of Afghanistan's exiled Zahir Shah, who ruled the country for four decades before being ousted in 1973.

However, most Western and Afghan analysts believe that CIA involvement would only further fragment Afghanistan. "Given Washington's policy flip-flops and general incompetence on Afghanistan, it would be disastrous if the CIA tried to fund anti-Taliban groups," says a European diplomat in Islamabad.

What the U.S. should do, say UN officials, is put serious pressure on neighbouring states to halt the supply of arms into Afghanistan—beginning with Pakistan. Many Afghans agree. "The

Americans hold the key to stop the external interference in Afghanistan, but they don't seem to have the will or determination to do so," says the Northern Alliance's Rabbani.

Adds the European diplomat: "Until the U.S. has a coherent Afghan policy rather than just a 'get bin Laden policy', the war will continue." And unless the international community resolves to end the Afghan conflict, Islamic militants and terrorists will always find a safe haven in Afghanistan.



Final Offensive?



The Taliban planned to launch their summer offensive against their sole remaining opposition, the Northern Alliance, in mid-July. But they held off while the United Nations made a last, desperate attempt to bring the two sides to the negotiating table at Tashkent in Uzbekistan.

Senior diplomats from Afghanistan's six neighbouring countries—China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—as well as Russia and the United States attended the meeting on July 19-20. But it ended in failure when the Taliban rejected a ceasefire.

The long-awaited, massive offensive finally began early on July 28 some 20 kilometres north of Kabul. Since the Taliban—drawn from the majority Pashtun ethnic group—captured Kabul in 1996, they have repeatedly tried to finish off the Northern Alliance made up of Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and Turkmen minorities. They hope this will be the final offensive.

Iran and Russia have stepped up arms supplies to the Alliance while Uzbekistan and Tajikistan provide supply bases. Everyone is seeking to secure some strategic advantage in the heart of Central Asia.

In Kabul, the Taliban have ordered relief agencies and doctors to empty hospital wards of patients in readiness for expected casualties. Transport planes from Pakistan fly in military supplies at night to the ramshackle Kabul airport. "We are ready to attack the enemy, which will be destroyed, God willing," Taliban Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, said shortly before the offensive began.

At Faizabad in the far northeast of the country, tucked in a deep valley in the Hindu Kush mountains close to the Chinese border, the Alliance leader, former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, knew what was coming.

"We are preparing to defend ourselves against a massive Taliban offensive on many fronts," Rabbani said. "They want to conquer the country with the help of Pakistan." His best hope may be that divisions within the Taliban movement and growing international pressure on Pakistan to halt arms supplies will allow them to survive for another year.

■ Ahmed Rashid

Das verbotene Land

Wenn Sadullah Durrani* am Freitag mit seiner Familie zum Picknick vor die Stadt fährt, hört er in seinem Auto iranische Volksmusik. „Man muß nur aufpassen, das ist alles“, meint der 43jährige, der drei Jahre Ingenieurwissenschaften in Rostock studiert hat und in Kabul einen kleinen Laden besitzt, in dem er verbotenerweise auch bunte Kinderdreiräder verkauft.

Ständig aufzupassen, lernt man in dieser Stadt schnell. Musik, Spielzeug, Fernsehen, Fotos und selbst Vogelhaltung sind von den Taliban und ihrem „Ministerium für die Förderung der Tugend und die Unterdrückung des Lasters“ als unislamisch verboten worden. Frauen, die ihren Schleier vom Gesicht nehmen oder ohne männliche Begleitung das Haus verlassen, müssen mit Schlägen rechnen. Denn stets patrouillieren bewaffnete

* Sämtliche Namen von der Redaktion geändert.

Männer in ihren Toyota-Pick-ups durch die Straßen, um über die Einhaltung der Gesetze zu wachen. Die bulligen Autos mit den verchromten Stoßstangen und den dunklen Scheiben gehören inzwischen genauso zum Auftritt der Taliban wie die schwarzen Turbane und die langen Bärte. „Der Bart muß so lang sein wie eine Cola-Dose“, sagt Sadullah und hält sich lachend die gespreizte Hand unters Kinn. Er findet, daß aus den strengen Sittenwächtern längst korumpelte Scharlatane geworden sind.

In der Tat schmücken sich die asketischen Gotteskrieger mittlerweile nicht nur mit modernen Pick-ups, sondern auch mit Walkie-talkies und verspiegelten Sonnenbrillen. Und da in letzter Zeit das Geld knapp geworden ist, erheben die Machthaber ständig wechselnde Steuern und bedienen sich auch bei ausländischen Hilfsorganisationen, denen

sie etwa über Nacht kurzerhand die Geländewagen abnehmen.

Seit drei Jahren ist Kabul, die zerbombte, verstümmelte Stadt, in der Hand der Taliban. Nach dem Sieg über die Kommunisten hatten die Mudschahidin 1992 begonnen, untereinander um die Hauptstadt Krieg zu führen. Vier Jahre lang mußten die Bewohner mit ansehen, wie sich ihre „Freiheitskämpfer“ in Plünderer und Vergewaltiger und Kabuls Prachtstraßen in Trümmerhaufen verwandelten. Die Taliban, denen der Ruf der Unbesiegbarkeit vorauselte, marschierten im September 1996 in die Stadt ein. Doch dort gab es nichts mehr zu besiegen: Die Menschen waren mit ihrer Kraft seit langem am Ende.

„Damals dachte ich, jetzt können wir endlich damit anfangen, unser Land wieder aufzubauen“, sagt Sadullah. Schnell wurde jedoch klar, daß die neue Führung zwar genaue

Moralvorstellungen, aber keine politischen Konzepte hatte: Bis heute kursieren in den Verwaltungsbüros statt Akten handgeschriebene Zettel, die wenigen Beamten werden seit Monaten nicht bezahlt, ein staatliches Schulsystem gibt es nicht, Strom- und Telefonnetze brechen regelmäßig zusammen, und mangels Kanalisation nehmen Krankheiten wie Tuberkulose und Diarrhö zu. Der Afghani verliert weiterhin dramatisch an Wert, so daß Geldscheine inzwischen pfundweise gewechselt werden. Kabuls Altstadt gleicht mit ihren trostlosen Häuserskeletten immer noch einer traurigen Theaterkulisse.

Auf dem Schwarzmarkt bieten die Menschen ihre letzten Habseligkeiten an, um wenigstens die horrenden Mehlpreise bezahlen zu können. Und im Norden der Hauptstadt schlagen

derzeit wieder Raketen ein. Denn die oppositionelle Nordallianz, die aus unterschiedlichen Mudschahidin-Gruppen besteht, hat den Taliban erneut den Krieg erklärt. Inmitten all der ungelösten Probleme bleiben die neuen Machthaber derweil gelassen: „Wir hoffen auf Allah und die UN“, sagen sie.

Die Armut zwingt auch Frauen zu Dingen, die sie bisher als zutiefst unwürdig empfunden hätten: Von Kopf bis Fuß in ihre Burka gehüllt sprechen sie auf der Straße Fremde an und bitten um Almosen. Die Taliban haben ihnen verboten, außerhalb des Hauses zu arbeiten. Also bleibt den Witwen – allein in Kabul leben 80 000 – nichts anderes übrig, als zu betteln.

Für viele sind die internationalen Hilfsorganisationen die einzige Möglichkeit, zu überleben. Rund 160 Millionen Dollar stellte die UN vergangenes Jahr zur Verfügung. Doch seit die Taliban an der Macht sind, haben sich immer mehr Länder aus der staatlichen Entwicklungshilfe für Afghanistan zurückgezogen. Auch das deutsche Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung hat seine Hilfe „wegen der Bürgerkriegssituation und wegen schwerster Menschenrechtsverletzungen“ eingestellt.

war eine offene, umtriebige Stadt. Dennoch kam es vor allem in der Zeit der sowjetischen Besatzung zu Angriffen konservativer Gruppen auf Frauen, die westliche Kleidung und Make-up trugen. Denn für die Afghanen auf dem Land war die Hauptstadt seit jeher ein lasterhafter Ort: Ungläubige, bartlose Männer residierten dort, die 1966 sogar eine Frau in die Regierung beriefen. Der moralische Feldzug der Taliban ist auch eine Rache der Provinz an der Stadt.

In den Jahren des Bürgerkriegs schließlich kannten die Frauen nur eine Angst: Nachts von einer der Mudschahidin-Banden verschleppt oder vor den Augen ihrer Männer vergewaltigt zu werden. Entsprechend erleichtert waren die Menschen, als die Taliban der anarchistischen Gewalt ein Ende bereiteten. Wie sehr die neuen, radikalislamischen Herrscher ihrerseits die Frauen unterdrücken, wurde erst später offenbar.

Krude Koranauslegungen und archaische Stammessitten prägen das

Frauenbild der Taliban, die zum größten Teil dem Stamm der Paschtunen angehören, einem Volk von Kriegern, das allein seinem eigenen Moralkodex, dem Paschtunwali, verpflichtet ist. Unumstößliche Gesetze sind etwa die Gastfreundschaft, der Respekt vor dem Alter und die Reinheit der Frau. Sie komplett zu verschleiern und auszugrenzen, zählt allerdings nicht zwangsläufig dazu.

Die Vorstellung, daß Frauen als Verführerinnen gefährlich sind und deswegen eingesperrt werden müssen, entstand erst in den ultra-konservativen, pakistanischen Koranschulen, in denen ein Großteil der Taliban ausgebildet wurde. Denn Taleb bedeutet in der Sprache der Paschtunen Religionsschüler. Von den Mullahs mit Essen und einem Schlafplatz geködert, lernten die kleinen Jungen in den Flüchtlingslagerschulen, von früh bis spät zu beten und Koran-Suren zu rezitieren. Wie man mit Frauen umgeht, lernten sie nicht, und auch nicht, wie man einen Staat regiert.

Religion und Staat bilden bei den Taliban eine untrennbare Einheit, entsprechend totalitär ist ihr Regierestil: „Allgemeine Wahlen sind mit der Scharia, dem islamischen Recht, nicht vereinbar. Deswegen lehnen wir sie ab“, sagt ein Taliban-Sprecher. „Es wird auch kein Staats- oberhaupt im westlichen Sinn geben. Alle wichtigen Entscheidungen trifft Mullah Mohammed Omar.“

Der 39-jährige ist der geistige Führer der Taliban. Er entstammt einer armen Bauernfamilie und wurde im Kampf gegen die Sowjets, bei dem er ein Auge verlor, zum Kriegshelden. In einem nächtlichen Traum soll er vom

Unterdessen sind die Menschen vor den Türen des Internationalen Roten Kreuzes in Kabul jenseits aller Politik auf die Hilfe des Auslands angewiesen: Weil sie ihre Mutter beerdigen mußte, hat eine junge Frau die wöchentliche Lebensmittelausgabe verpaßt. Zu Hause warten sechs Kinder auf sie; ihr Mann ist bereits seit fünf Jahren tot. In Tränen aufgelöst irrt sie nun im Regen auf der Straße umher.

Für April ist es dieses Jahr ungewöhnlich kalt. In der deutschen Botschaft legt der Koch noch ein paar Holzscheite in den offenen Kamin und serviert den Besuchern zu Mozarts Klavierkonzerten ein Stück Aprikosenkuchen. Seit sechs Jahren lebt die Deutsche Irene Salimi in den vom Krieg demolierten Botschaftsgebäuden, die sie nach dem Weggang der deutschen Diplomaten aus Afghanistan verwaltet. Zur Zeit teilt sie das weitläufige Areal außer mit dem Koch und dem Gärtner noch mit sechs Schäferhunden, die hier zum Minensuchen ausgebildet werden.

Im Treppenhaus liegt auf Tischen ausgebreitet eine kleine Ausstellung von Granatteilen und Raketenresten. „Anfangs habe ich immer noch alles genau beschriftet“, sagt sie achselzuckend. „Doch inzwischen lass' ich das.“ Vor den Eingängen stapeln sich Sandsäcke zu hohen Labyrinthen: „Wir rechnen wieder mit Kämpfen.“ Zum Abschied gibt es noch ein Glas Sherry. Der ist aus der DDR-Botschaft übriggeblieben. Ein seltener Genuß in einem Land, in dem es keinen Alkohol gibt. Draußen ist es bereits dunkel; um 21 Uhr beginnt die Sperrstunde. Die Nächte in Kabul sind schwarz und leer.

Das Leben in der Hauptstadt hat sich in den letzten 20 Jahren mehrmals grundlegend geändert, vor allem für die Frauen. In den Siebzigern war es für die Töchter der Mittel- und Oberschicht ein selbstverständliches Recht, zu wählen, zu studieren und zu arbeiten. Den Schleierzwang hatte König Mohammed Sahir Schah bereits 1959 aufgehoben, und Kabul

Propheten selbst den Auftrag bekommen haben, Afghanistan zum wahren Islam zurückzuführen. Der genaue Zeitpunkt seines Auftauchens liegt immer noch im dunkeln. Eine Ver-

sion besagt, daß er im Oktober 1994 einem pakistanischen Handelskonvoi, der von Mudschahidin überfallen wurde, mit ein paar Männern zu Hilfe kam, ihn sicher nach Kandahar brachte und die Stadt einnahm, ohne daß ein Schuß gefallen sei.

1996 wählten ihn seine Anhänger zum Amir el-mu'minin, dem obersten Befehlshaber der Gläubigen. Seither umgibt ihn eine Aura der Unfehlbarkeit. Er spricht wenig und meidet öffentliche Auftritte. Damit in der Taliban-Führung kein Einzelner allzu mächtig wird, besetzt Mullah Omar viele Posten immer wieder neu. Dieser ständige Wechsel und die Uneinigkeit innerhalb der Regierung sorgen ständig für Verwirrung: Mal dürfen Mädchen bis zum zwölften Lebensjahr in die Schule gehen, dann wieder nur bis zum neunten. Und

obschon Sport generell verboten ist, gibt es in Kandahar eine „Fußballverordnung“, die den Jungen zu bestimmten Zeiten das Kicken erlaubt.

„Diese Männer können nur beten und Krieg führen, sonst nichts“, sagt Tehmina Lodhi. Die 27-jährige ist vor einem halben Jahr aus Masar-i-Scharif geflüchtet, als die Taliban in einem Gemetzel, bei dem 8000 Menschen starben, die Stadt im Norden Afghanistans zum zweiten Mal einnahmen. Heute unterrichtet sie in einem der vielen Flüchtlingslager in Pakistan Englisch. Tehmina ist eine von 1,5 Millionen Flüchtlingen, die derzeit in Pakistan leben. Weitere 1,4 Millionen sind nach dem Einmarsch der Russen nach Iran geflohen. Und solange die Wirtschaftsmisere und die Kämpfe anhalten, verlassen die Menschen weiterhin das Land.

Aus Tehminas Klassenzimmer dringt eine laute Mädchenstimme: „What is this? This is a rose.“ Was hier im Lager als selbstverständlich empfunden wird, ist im Nachbarland

Afghanistan derzeit eine Seltenheit: Mädchenunterricht und weibliches Lehrpersonal. Dort gibt es für Mädchen oft nur sogenannte „Home-schools“, in denen der Unterricht privat stattfindet.

Die wenigen offiziellen Schulen, die es gibt, werden von internationalen Hilfsorganisationen unterstützt. Die Zusammenarbeit mit den Tali-

ban ist dabei recht unterschiedlich: „Je nachdem, mit wem man es zu tun hat, kann man eine ganze Menge bewegen“, sagt Ursula Nölle. Die 74jährige baut mit ihrem kleinen Hamburger Verein seit 16 Jahren in Afghanistan und in pakistanischen Flüchtlingslagern Schulen auf und mußte sich im Lauf der Zeit mit immer neuen Machthabern auseinandersetzen.

Inzwischen weiß sie, daß in Afghanistan die zwei wichtigsten Tugenden Beharrlichkeit und Geduld sind. Und mit dieser Art, die Ideologie der Taliban von unten aufzuweichen, hat sie tatsächlich großen attacken fahren, sind sie enorm mobil. Anfangs kamen die Taliban mit einem Stück Brot am Tag aus, ohne Decken, ohne Stiefel. Sie hausten in ihren Autos und wuschen sich monatelang nicht. Und sie waren jederzeit bereit für den Märtyrertod. Sie waren die billigsten und die motiviertesten Soldaten der Welt.“

Später in der Nacht kommt der General ins Erzählen. Und während er sich an seine frühen Kämpfe erinnert, wird seine monotone Stimme lebendig, und seine Katzenaugen strahlen: „Wir hatten außer zwei Kalaschnikows und drei Gewehren nur noch vier sehr alte pakistanische Maschinengewehre. Und die gaben ihren Geist auf, nachdem wir zwei Kugeln abgefeuert hatten. Wir kämpften trotzdem 40 Tage lang und erreichten das Salang-Tal. Dann ging uns die Munition aus. Ich wurde verletzt, und wir verloren das Pandschir-Tal. Schließlich bekamen wir 600

Mann Verstärkung dazu und griffen wieder an. Als die Kommunisten uns abermals besiegten, wurde uns klar: Wir würden Afghanistan befreien oder sterben.“

Der Ausgang der Geschichte ist bekannt: 1989 zog die Sowjetunion ihre schwer angeschlagene Armee ab. Viele Afghanen glauben seither, daß diese Niederlage den Zusammenbruch der UdSSR ausgelöst hat.

Die beiden deutschen Journalisten sind in dieser Nacht nicht die einzigen Zuhörer im Hauptquartier des Kommandanten: Auch zwei französische Waffenschieber, die sich ungeschickt als Schreiber eines kleinen Militärblattes ausgeben, lauschen den Berichten des afghanischen Feldherrn und wollen ihm zu später

Stunde noch Scharfschützengewehre mit Explosivmunition anbieten. Aber Massud lächelt nur sein sanftes Lächeln und fragt, ob die Franzosen eine Waffe besäßen, mit der man amerikanische Apache-Hubschrauber abschießen könne. Das müssen die beiden zwar verneinen, versprechen aber, ihm ein Ausbildungsvideo der Fremdenlegion zukommen zu lassen.

Einen Tag später bombardieren MiG-Jagdflugzeuge der Taliban das Hauptquartier der Nordallianz und treffen einen Bazar, auf dem 30 Menschen sterben, darunter auch der Leiter des Roten Kreuzes. Ahmed Schah Massud überlebt. Und der Krieg, der nicht zu gewinnen ist, geht weiter.

Seit jeher versuchen ausländische Regierungen, Afghanistan für ihre Interessen zu nutzen. Die USA unterstützten erst die Mudschahidin gegen die Russen und dann inoffiziell auch die Taliban. Seit jedoch klar ist, daß der Terrorist Ussama Ibn Ladin die paschtunische Gastfreundschaft genießt, Hillary Clinton bei ihrem Feldzug gegen Frauenunterdrückung vor Erfolg: Derzeit verhandelt sie unter anderem über eine Mädchenschule in Kandahar, der Hochburg der Taliban. „Uns geht es dabei ausschließlich um die Menschen, denen wir eine Ausbildung ermöglichen wollen“, sagt sie.

Wie wichtig der Dorfbevölkerung der Schulbesuch ihrer Kinder ist, erlebte sie dieses Jahr in der Provinz Kunar im Osten des Landes. Dort schlossen die Mullahs eine Jungenschule, um sie in eine Koranschule umzuwandeln. Gleichwohl versammeln sich die vertriebenen Schüler nun in einem verfallenen Haus und unter Bäumen zum Unterricht.

Der Versuch der Taliban, die Menschen auf dem Land ebenso zu kontrollieren wie die Stadtbevölkerung, scheint zu scheitern. Denn in den oft unzugänglichen, kargen Gegenden leben die Afghanen seit Jahrhunderten gemäß ihrer Stammestradition und interessieren sich vor allem dafür, ob etwas auf ihrem Land wächst und ob sich das auf dem Markt verkaufen läßt. Um die abstrusen Gesetze der Koranschüler kümmern man sich hier wenig.

So kam es in der Provinz Khost zu einer bewaffneten Auseinandersetzung, weil die Taliban eine uralte Sitte, das Aneinanderschlagen von Eiern, verbieten wollten – weil es ein Glücksspiel ist. Und in der kleinen Stadt Asadabad im Osten traut sich der Taliban-Gouverneur nachts nicht mehr aus dem Haus, weil er den Zorn der Dorfjugend fürchtet.

Bereits im 19. Jahrhundert machten England und später die Sowjetunion die bittere Erfahrung, daß sich dieses Land nicht zentralistisch regieren läßt. Ähnlich ergeht es den neuen Machthabern: Obwohl die Taliban behaupten, sie seien Teil des Volkes, werden auch sie inzwischen als Besatzer angesehen, die nur an Macht interessiert sind. Und um die wird in Afghanistan derzeit wieder erbittert gekämpft.

Zum zweiten Mal an diesem Tag endet das Spiel mit einem Unentschieden. Schulterzuckend schiebt der Offizier die Figuren auf dem Schachbrett zusammen und blickt in der Mittagshitze über das Land. Von seiner Hügelstellung aus hat er einen guten Blick auf die beiden Dörfer Chensoy und Chojha. Zwischen ihnen verläuft die Front. Die Dörfer sind längst verlassen, und die Herrschaft über den Hügel hat allein im letzten Jahr dreimal gewechselt. Der Offizier betrachtet nachdenklich seine kleine Truppe, den eingegrabenen Panzer und den ungeladenen Raketenwerfer, der unten am Hang auf einem alten russischen Geländewagen steht. Viel ist es nicht, was er den Taliban-Milizen entgegensetzen hat. Unterdesen sind von Westen her vereinzelt Granateinschläge zu hören.

Seit März herrscht wieder Krieg im Norden des Landes, wo unter der militärischen Führung des Mudschahidin-Kommandanten Ahmed Schah Massud die ehemalige afghanische Regierung immer noch Widerstand gegen die Taliban leistet. Wie jedes Jahr haben die Kriegsparteien im Winter über einen Waffenstillstand verhandelt und Gefangene ausgetauscht. Im Frühjahr indessen, als das Wetter wärmer wurde, schlugen wieder die ersten Bomben ein. Dabei beschuldigen sich beide Seiten, den Anfang gemacht zu haben.

„Kein Mensch will diesen Krieg“, sagt Ahmed Schah Massud und setzt eine kummervolle Miene auf. „Aber ich sehe es als unsere Pflicht an, unser Vaterland vor den Unterdrückern zu retten.“ Es ist kurz vor Mitternacht, und der Kommandant ist noch hellwach, als er sich jetzt über die Landkarte beugt, um für die Besucher den Kampferlauf der letzten Tage nachzuzeichnen. Mit dem Kugelschreiber meißelt er energisch Gefechtsstellungen und Truppenbewegungen in die Tischplatte.

Der 46jährige Tadschike, der als „Löwe des Pandschir-Tals“ bereits im Kampf gegen die Russen zu legendärem Ruhm gelangte, ist voller Bewunderung für die Taktik seiner paschtunischen Gegner: „Durch die Pick-ups, mit denen sie ihre Nacht-

allem die Taliban im Visier hat und die USA keine Pipeline mehr durch das Land bauen wollen, ziehen sich die amerikanischen Geldgeber aus Afghanistan zurück.

Nachdem auch Saudi-Arabien letztes Jahr seine Unterstützung eingestellt hat, liefert nur noch Pakistan Geld und Waffen an die Taliban. Deshalb wird eine andere Einnahmequelle immer wichtiger: das Heroin. Alexander der Große führte den Mohn einst als Heilpflanze in Afghanistan ein. Inzwischen stammen knapp 60 Prozent des weltweit gewonnenen Rohopiums aus Afghanistan. 1998 waren es 3200 Tonnen, daraus lassen sich 350 Tonnen Heroin herstellen.

80 Prozent des Anbaus, der im Frühjahr die Ebenen weiß, rot und lilafarben sprengelt, liegen im Gebiet der Taliban. Die haben zwar den Opiumhandel, aber nicht den Anbau verboten, und sie erheben immerhin

zehn Prozent Steuern auf die Ernten der rund 200 000 Opiumbauern.

Unterdessen fordert das Antidrogen-Programm der UN die Vernichtung aller Mohnfelder, um in einem zweiten Schritt landwirtschaftliche Alternativen zu entwickeln. Die Taliban beharren auf der umgekehrten Reihenfolge, zeigen aber hin und wieder guten Willen und brennen ein paar Mohnfelder ab.

Doch ganz gleich ob sie Weizen oder Mohn anbauen – die afghanischen Bauern leben gefährlich. Denn sie arbeiten auf einem Land, das zu den meistverminnten der Welt gehört. Täglich werden zehn bis zwölf Menschen durch Minen getötet oder verletzt – meist Kinder, Landarbeiter oder Nomaden mit ihren Herden. Seit zehn Jahren bemüht sich die UN, Felder und Dörfer wieder nutzbar zu machen und die Menschen über die ständige Gefahr auf-

zuklären: „Verlaß die ausgetretenen Pfade nicht! Selbst dann nicht, wenn du dringend mal muß!“ rät der Mann von der Minenräum-Einheit den Kindern, die in der Provinz Baghlan zu seinem Informationskurs gekommen sind.

Die kleine Khalida erzählt von der Arbeit der Minenräumer in ihrem Dorf: „Die Hunde haben den Sprengstoff gerochen, und dann wurden die Minen gesprengt.“ Als die Räumarbeiten beendet waren, führen die Männer vom „Mine Action Programm“ mit ihren Lastwagen über die Felder, um den Menschen das Vertrauen in ihren Grund und Boden wiederzugeben. „Im nächsten Frühjahr wird dort Weizen ausgesät“, sagt Khalida.

Doch während die UN hier mit großem Aufwand das Land bewohnbar macht, werden 40 Kilometer weiter nördlich schon wieder neue todtbringende Minen verlegt.

Pakistansk press Afghanistan opens lines to world phone system

■ First western private investment project in two decades *Nation 990511*

From Roshan Zamir

WASHINGTON—Ultramodern telephone equipment landed at Kabul's airport Friday, launching the first Western private investment project in Afghanistan in two decades and promising to connect this politically and technologically isolated nation to the world of global information and communication.

The project will replace the current telephone system which was installed in the 1950s and has only two international lines and fewer than 10,000 partially working telephones in the entire country of 18 million people. Afghanistan's international dialing code, 93, has not functioned since before the Soviet invasion, and all calls to and from overseas must be booked through an operator in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Technologically, the country has been devastated. Beginning in 1979, a decade of armed resistance to Soviet occupation followed by years of civil warfare left the major cities and their infrastructures damaged by rockets, land mines and urban combat. Since the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, both the capital and the economy have remained in ruins, with veiled women and gaunt children begging on every corner.

"Over the next month all that will begin to change," says a Washington Post correspondent reporting from Kabul. Telephone Systems International Inc., a New Jersey-based investment group operating in a joint venture with Afghanistan's Communications Ministry, has embarked on a \$240 million

project that will install a mobile phone system in two cities, permit direct overseas dialing through a satellite link and gradually refurbish the existing phone system.

"Obviously there's a risk to this, but it's very exciting to be doing something concrete. If Afghanistan is to drag itself out of its dire economic situation, it won't happen until people

can talk to each other," said Michael Cecil, a British-born telecommunications entrepreneur who is a vice president of the company.

Taliban authorities harbor enormous, and perhaps unrealistic ambitions for the project. In interviews this week, various officials said they hoped it would help bring in more foreign trade and investment, reestablish links with Afghan professionals who fled overseas, bring the Internet to their educational system and improve Afghanistan's image abroad.

"This is like a gate for us," said Communications Minister Tabib Alladad, speaking in Pashto through an interpreter as he marveled at a tiny pocket phone that Cecil and his partners had brought to his office. "Our economy is blocked, our communications are blocked, and every other aspect of our society. Once the gate is open, everything else will open up too."

Downstairs in the dark, empty ministry building, dozens of people have been lining up each day to apply for the promised phone service. Among the most eager are the storefront traders and money changers who keep Afghanistan's informal economy going.

In some ways, opening up Afghanistan's communications to the world would seem to clash with the Taliban's efforts to cut off what its leaders view as the decadent, libertine culture of the West. After taking power, the Taliban

banned television, cassette tapes and all music except recitations of the Quran. While many women in the capital once wore high-heels and jeans, they now must be covered in head-to-toe veils while outdoors. But officials insisted that they are not worried about Western culture seeping in through satellite dishes and cell phones. They said they believe it will be possible to separate constructive uses of communication, such as making trade more efficient, from others uses that do not conform to their Islamic values, such as entertainment.

"This is a Muslim country, and our people are trained for this. They will use it for business news, not for other things," said Ramatullah, an engineer and senior official in the Communications Ministry.

The telephone project also has inherent conflicts with the foreign policies of the United States and most West

European countries, which have shunned the Taliban regime and protested that it violates human rights by inflicting harsh punishments for crimes and by preventing women from attending school or working.

Links between the Taliban and Saudi exile Osama bin Laden also have hampered Western investment. Efforts by California-based Unocal Corp. to gain Taliban approval to build an oil pipeline across Afghanistan were dropped last year — one day after a U.S. missile strike against what were described as bin Laden's guerrilla training bases in Afghanistan.

But Cecil and his partners, who include both British and Afghan American businessmen, asserted that they are neither pro- nor anti-Taliban. They said they have been motivated by two aims: to help reconstruct a country that has been virtually destroyed, and to make money in the process.

"We are trying to stay out of politics, but I would argue that it makes more sense to engage the Taliban than to ostracize them," said Stuart Benthara, another TSI vice president who traveled here this week.

Taliban start destroying poppy

News 990515

QUETTA: Taliban have started destroying poppy crop in the country's southern region where 64 per cent of the country's total opium was produced last year.

According to sources, this is the first time Afghanistan, the biggest opium producer in the world after Burma, has started destroying poppy crop in this part of the country.

Kandahar Governor Maulvi Muhammad Hassan Rehmani said his country was ready to destroy poppy procured by it provided it is assisted in repair of its agriculture sector, improvement and maintenance of infrastructure and Karez (under ground water channels) de-

stroyed in infighting during the past 20 years.

He said Islam also teaches us to refrain from use of narcotics.

He said "our government has no means to do this on its own due to scarcity of financial resources. The destruction process was voluntary and reflective of their desire to give up the poppy cultivation".

Under the agreement Taliban will destroy 20 per cent of the poppy crop and the UN in return will carry out development work and provide seeds for other crops. Last year in Khakrez area poppy was cultivated on 518 hectares of land.

According to UNDCP annual

poppy survey, last year an estimated total of 63,674 hectares of opium was cultivated while total production of opium in the country was 3,269 metric tones.

Governor Maulvi Muhammad Hassan Rehmani said that the small amount of destruction was just a sample for the world to see that Taliban do want to get rid of this crop.

He, however, said the UNDCP must cooperate and extend facilities to the poor farmers in converting to other crops. The poppy eradication will also continue for a couple of days. The operation would also be launched in Ghorak and Maivand districts of Kandahar province Saturday. — APP

Fighting around News 990511 Bamiyan continues

ing in the mountains around the city.

He said the situation in Bamiyan remained unchanged since Sunday afternoon and added: "There has been no counter offensive but there are clashes in the mountains".

Outside the central provinces, recent fighting has been focussed in the northern province of Kunduz and around the strategically important Salang tunnel, that links north and south Afghanistan.

Both sides have claimed gains.

The Taliban say they have held Bangi in Kunduz while the alliance claims to have secured districts around Khanabad which links Kunduz to Takhar province, where the alliance hold an extensive support network.

Independent sources have confirmed heavy Taliban aerial bombardments in the area, particularly in Taloqan the provincial capital of Takhar.

Air traffic at Kabul airport has been heavy.

No mention was made on the official broadcaster Radio Shariat when the city fell to the Hezb-i-Wahdat or when it was re-taken almost three weeks later. But Taliban Information Minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi said Sunday that Bamiyan was recaptured in a two-pronged operation from the north and south of the city.

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's warring sides kept up fighting in the mountains of Hazarajat on Monday as independent sources confirmed the ruling Taliban had recaptured Bamiyan city.

One western source said the militia had entered the central Afghan city around noon Sunday and forced the Hezb-i-Wahdat faction of the Northern Alliance to retreat into the surrounding mountains.

"The Taliban control the city," he told AFP.

A Taliban victory at Bamiyan, in the heartland of the ethnic Hazaras, defied most expectations after Hezb-i-Wahdat troops pushed the militia out of the city on April 21.

"Most people expected the Hezb-i-Wahdat to hold Bamiyan. After all it's their home town but the Taliban are back in there and the situation has completely changed again," the western sources said.

Until April 21 the Taliban had maintained an eight-month occupation of Bamiyan, which was aided by some local commanders who sided with the Taliban and then switched back to the alliance in late March.

The alliance has said little about Bamiyan but spokesman Abdullah (eds: one name) told AFP heavy fighting continued Monday morn-

Taliban seek help to eradicate poppy

News 990518

KABUL: Taliban movement renewed a pledge on Monday to ban what is one of the world's largest opium crops if its poverty-stricken farmers are given help to find alternative crops.

Najibullah Shams, Secretary General of Taliban's anti-narcotics commission said after the destruction of poppy crop at the weekend of hectares (acres) in three main districts of the southern region of Kandahar.

"We guarantee to eliminate poppy cultivation in a very short period provided the world community assistis our farmers," he told Reuters.

Some 64 percent Afghanistan's opium harvest of more than 3,200 tonnes last year came from Kandahar province. After refining, about 10 tonnes of opium produces one tonne of heroin.

Shams said it was the start of the Taliban's campaign to wipe out poppy growth across Afghanistan, most of which is controlled by the Taliban, but said they needed help from the outside world.

"The infrastructure has been shattered by two decades of war here and needs to be repaired. Farmers are poor and need help for repairs of wells, irrigation channels and farms," he said.

"With all these broken, farmers tend to grow the poppy because it thrives in relatively poor soil and needs little irrigation. The Taliban can't offer alternative to these poor farmers, that's why we are asking for help," he added.

The destruction in Kandahar was carried out by the Taliban in Ghorak, Khakrez and Maiwand districts, where the United Nations Interna-

tional Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) funds a pilot project to persuade farmers to grow other crops.

The \$16.4 million pilot project started in November 1997, targets Kandahar — the spiritual and cultural heartland of the Taliban — and the Shinwar district of Jalalabad as a starting point for wiping out poppy growth. The UNDCP intends to launch a drive to wipe out the poppy throughout the country if this project proves successful.

Afghanistan ranks alongside Myanmar as the world's biggest producers of opium. Some 60 percent of the heroin produced from Afghan opium makes its way to the West through porous borders with Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia.

The Taliban say the 10-year UNDCP project is ineffective. Poppy cultivation can be brought to immediate halt.

"Why should we launch a 10-year project if we can put an end to poppy cultivation in short span of time?" Shams asked.

The movement wants the UNDCP to channel funds through the them as they feel "poor UN spending patterns make the project ineffective-ness".

"The UNDCP pilot encourages others to grow poppy as initial records for 1999 show that the poppy cultivation is on the rise here," he noted.

Shams said, "the Taliban can simply ban poppy cultivation but we have no resources to offer alternative crops to the affected farmers."

If we get funds then the world will see the miraculous eradication of drug here, he said.—Reuters

UN staff arrives in Mazar-i-Sharif

News 990518

ISLAMABAD: A 6-membe team of the United Nations international staff Monday arrived in the northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif, the first visit by UN members in one and half year, a UN spokesperson said.

In March this year the UN announced plans to gradually send humanitarian workers back to Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with Taliban to ensure safety and security of the UN international and national staff. The agreement had bound the ruling Taliban to provide protection to the UN staff, its premises and investigate into the killing of the 3 UN staff members.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said last month that he would consider withdrawal of the UN staff from Afghanistan for the second time if Taliban leadership does not ensure security to them.—NNI

Taliban accused of massacring civilians

News 990519

KABUL: Afghanistan's opposition on Tuesday accused the ruling Taliban of massacring hundreds of civilian families since the militia recaptured Bamiyan city nine days ago.

"Following the fall of Bamiyan city, reports reaching the Alliance high command have confirmed the massacres of hundreds of innocent civilian families," senior opposition commander General Sayed Husain Anwari said. Independent sources said they could not confirm whether the recent battles in Bamiyan had turned into a massacre of civilians.

But they said rumours of a massacre had escalated in Kabul during recent days and they were able to confirm other claims including the systemic razing of civilian homes.

Anwari said residential houses in the central Afghan city had been burned to the ground and a 'terror campaign' against ethnic Hazaras had been extended to neighbouring Yakawlang and surrounding districts.

"We're getting rumours more and more each day of a massacre," one Western aid worker said.

Another European aid worker said

"we know the houses were burnt and there are a lot of differences between the Taliban who are ethnic Pashtoon and the Hazaras who populate Bamiyan."

"In Afghanistan the average size of a family is six and if this massacre occurred then this could mean that thousands more have perished," he said. The European aid worker was referring to reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch who have said the Taliban massacred between 3,000 and 8,000 Hazaras at northern Mazar-i-Sharif last August.

Anwari said the massacre at Bamiyan prompted many locals to take refuge in the surrounding mountains where extremely cold weather claimed more lives.

"Fighting has now reached west Bamiyan, where the Taliban have shown little hesitancy in extending the terror campaign to Yakawlang and surrounding regions," he said.

Independent sources confirmed that Yakawlang fell under Taliban control late last week.

Taliban spokesman was not available for comment.—AFP

Taliban accused of burning over 200 houses

News 990520

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: More than 200 houses in the west of Bamiyan city have been burnt, allegedly by Taliban troops after capturing the town from pro-Iranian Hizb-e-Wahdat on May 9.

This was reported by the Peshawar-based Sahaar News Agency, whose director general Waliullah Saleem returned from Bamiyan Tuesday.

Mr Saleem said locals in Bamiyan blamed Taliban militia for having burnt 200 to 250 houses in the west of Bamiyan city in central Afghanistan. "Smoke was still coming out of the debris," recalled the agency's director, who said no causality took place in the fire.

Quoting locals, Mr Saleem said most of the residents of Bamiyan had evacuated before the invasion of the town by the student militia which had lost the Shia-populated city to Hizb-e-Wahdat on April 21. Those

who could fight against the invaders were in the city, explained other residents.

Mr Saleem further said Bamiyan city and Yawklang, headquarters of Hizb-e-Wahdat, 50 kilometers west of the provincial capital, are in the control of Taliban. As many as 50 tanks, trucks and other vehicles of the militia were seen patrolling on the streets in Bamiyan city and its suburbs.

The agency further said Bamiyan airport has become very busy with Taliban administration using this 3300-meter long air strip for transporting ammunition and food stuff from Khawaja Rawash airport in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan.

Quoting Taliban sources in Bamiyan, the agency said the militia set free 13 drivers and 25 locals, languishing in the jail in the foot of Budha's stupa severely damaged during the latest round of fighting between Hizb-e-Wahdat and Taliban.

Kosovo issue will sap scarce funds for Afghanistan

Nation 990520

KABUL (AFP) - Massive foreign aid demands in Kosovo have exacted a toll on Afghanistan and further complicated life for aid groups, already struggling to re-establish themselves here.

"Yeah, I'm mad because they haven't sent me my money because of Kosovo and that means I haven't been able to pay my staff, pay for my supplies and I owe people money," American aid worker Mary MacMakin said.

As the director for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Support for Afghanistan (PARSA), MacMakin, a 70-year-old grandmother, is responsible for wool spinning cooperatives run by women. She also relies on the funding body United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to run other programmes which include training illiterate orphans for apprenticeships in the electrical trades.

"The work is going on but the funding is precarious," she says.

Her sentiments are echoed by many aid workers who see Kosovo emerging as a rival for scarce funds, and as an unfortunate distraction which is slow-

ing down the bureaucrats who allocate aid. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it needs 143 million dollars for its immediate efforts in helping 750,000 refugees who have fled Kosovo.

Total pledges exceeded 100 million dollars following an urgent appeal to Western governments a week ago.

"Anytime there's another humanitarian crisis it obviously detracts attention from Afghanistan, and Kosovo is holding the world's attention now," said PACTEC airlines Kabul director David Brooks. PACTEC is a non-profit airline and communications support group which specialises in ferrying members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across borders.

Most NGOs left Afghanistan in July last year after a dispute with the ruling Taliban involving the relocation their operations to an abandoned polytechnic. The rest followed a month later in a UN evacuation of the country, triggered by the death of a UN staffer, seen as a reprisal for the US missile strikes in Afghanistan on August 20.

The UN returned in March, and 32

NGOs have also agreed to come back but their numbers are small compared to a year ago.

"They are coming in," Brooks said. "But in Afghanistan we've also got 'donor fatigue'."

"The war has been going on for 20 years and it's getting more and more difficult for NGOs to raise money for Afghanistan which is tragic because this country needs relief and development support, now more than ever."

Afghan 'donor fatigue' is a euphemism for foreign governments and charities which have grown increasingly tired by unending civil war and the harsh practices imposed on Afghans by the Taliban.

"Few people care about Afghanistan," said another Western NGO official, who declined to be named. "The situation rarely improves and this country is fast slipping off the map."

He said aid funding was being linked to human rights — and in Afghanistan where alleged terrorists are sheltered and women have been ostracised from work and education — finding money is getting harder.

HR groups asked to probe Bamiyan massacre

KABUL (AFP) - A senior Afghan opposition commander Wednesday urged international human rights groups to investigate his claims of a massacre in central Bamiyan city after it fell to the Taliban militia.

General Sayed Husain Anwari told AFP that a report by human rights watchdogs such as Amnesty International into the allegation would have an impact and could "curb the rage of the Taliban."

"But for the people, even if Amnesty intervenes, they still cannot trust the Taliban and return to their homes in Bamiyan," he said.

Anwari claims the Islamic militia massacred "hundreds of innocent civilian families," razed their homes and extended a "terror campaign" in Bamiyan against ethnic

Hazaras to neighbouring Yakawlang and surrounding districts.

He said the massacre began immediately after the militia recaptured Bamiyan on May 9.

"In the initial stage of their entry to Bamiyan they committed this crime. But now they don't have access to the locals who have fled to the mountains. The majority have left Bamiyan," he said.

"We cannot yet give a precise figure. Our investigation is in progress. We will come to you with more details." A senior Taliban spokesman declined to comment but independent sources in Pakistan and Afghanistan said reports were emerging that civilians were killed in Bamiyan after the Taliban moved in.

Taliban accused of bid to assassinate Sayyaf

KABUL: The Afghan opposition Wednesday accused the ruling Taliban of attempting to assassinate senior political leader Ustad Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf in an aerial bombardment that killed 13 people. "The targeting of Ustad Sayyaf's residence has only confirmed Taliban plans of continuing their policy of annihilating prominent opposition figures in and out of Afghanistan," said an opposition spokesman, General Sayed Hussain Anwari.

Sayyaf was recently elected deputy chairman of the Supreme Afghan Leadership Council and has been touted as a successor to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance's political leader, Burhunuddin Rabbani. Deposed president Rabbani is still recognised by the international community as Afghanistan's legitimate head of state.

Sayyaf, an ethnic Pashtun, has been labelled a "traitor" by the Pashtun-dominated Taliban for siding with the Northern Alliance.

"Although Ustad Sayyaf survived this plot unharmed, 13 civilians were killed with another two critically injured in these bombardments," Anwari said in a statement. He said the air strikes took place early Tuesday morning on Sayyaf's home at Gulbahar in Kapisa province on the edge of the Parjisher Valley, which remains the stronghold of the Northern Alliance.

A Taliban spokesman, contacted by AFP, declined to comment on the allegations. Independent confirmation was not immediately available.—AFP

Taliban launch attack to recapture key valley

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia Saturday launched an attack to eject supporters of the rival Northern Alliance from the strategic valley of Dar-e Soof in the northern province of Samangan, the opposition said.

General Sayed Husain Anwari, a senior opposition commander, said the alliance supporters repulsed the attack which was backed by heavy artillery and aerial bombardment.

"Although fighting continues in the valley, enemy troops have failed to advance towards the alliance strongholds," Anwari told AFP by satellite telephone from inside Afghanistan.

Parts of the long and narrow valley, which sits on an alternative highway linking the Taliban-held Bamiyan with their northern stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif, have changed hands several times in the past month.

A Taliban comment or an independent confirmation of the opposition claim was not immediately available.

The Taliban recaptured Bamiyan in central Afghanistan on May 9 about three weeks after they lost it to the opposition troops.

Taliban amputate thieves' hands, Kabul attacked

KABUL (AP) - The right hands of four young men—all convicted thieves—were cut off Friday before a crowd of several hundred people in the Kabul Sports Stadium.

The men sat on the rain-soaked grass, their legs bound by chains, and their faces covered with their turbans, while three doctors wearing surgical masks performed the surgery, said eyewitnesses.

The hand of the first man, Mohammed Tahir, was shown to the spectators.

Tahir and Mohammed Gul were found guilty of stealing the equivalent of about dollars 1,000. The other two men, Mohammed Nasseem and Bari Elah, were employees of the Taliban's interior ministry, who confessed to breaking into a home and stealing carpets and household items.

Earlier Friday nine rockets slammed into Kabul all of them hitting near the combined military and civilian airport. Hospitals in the area said there were no casualties as a result of the rocketing.

Life miserable in Mazar: UN staff

F.P. Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD — A team of the United Nations international staff has returned from the northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif, the first visit in one and half year.

The 6-member team determined the logistical requirements that need to be in place before the UN can resume an international presence in the area, spokesperson Stephanie Bunker said Monday at a news conference held at UN information centre. She told reporters at the weekly press briefing that findings of the team report were being studied by the concerned UN agencies.

The UN international staff was pulled out of Mazar-i-Sharif in September 1997 when the UN offices were stormed and looted.

The spokesperson said the team members could not move outside the city because of security situation during three-day stay in Mazar.

She said that poverty and unemployment are high in Mazar-i-Sharif and selling of assets has increased than other cities. She however said prices of wheat was less in this northern town than other areas.

The United Nations withdrew international staff from Afghanistan in August last year after the US Cruise missile strike, which followed by killing an Italian UN official in an attack by an angry mob, who was protesting against the US attack. In March this year the UN an-

nounced plans to gradually send humanitarian workers back to Afghanistan after reaching an agreement with Taliban to ensure safety and security of the UN international and national staff.

In October last year the United Nations and Taliban inked a security agreement for the return of the UN international staff. The agreement had bound the ruling Taliban to provide protection to the UN staff, its premises and investigate into the killing of the 3 UN staff members.

A number of teams of the UN international staff have visited Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar as part of its plan to assess relief operations in the war-devastated country. The next destination of the UN staff is Badakhshan.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said last month that he would consider withdrawal of the UN staff from Afghanistan for the second time if Taliban leadership does not ensure security to them.

He issued the warning in a report on Afghanistan to the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Taliban, he said, must fulfill its commitments to ensure the security of UN staff in Afghanistan and if they failed to keep this commitment, he would consider withdrawing UN staff from the country.

The United States and Britain have barred their citizens working with UN, not to return to the war-devastated Afghanistan for security reasons.

World interested in rebuilding Afghan institutions

Nation 990523

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR - Amidst peace initiatives for a negotiated solution to the long-awaited Afghan conflict, a large number of world countries, particularly the developed ones have evinced keen interest in the reconstruction of war-affected institutions of Afghanistan.

In this connection, Germany has decided to send a parliamentary delegation to Kabul in September. To make arrangement for a German team's visit to Kabul, a two-member delegation Saturday left Peshawar for Kabul. The delegates will comprise Mr Brechard, political advisor of the German Parliament, and First Secretary in the German Embassy at Islamabad Mr Konicka.

Sources from Islamabad informed this correspondent that both Brechard and Konicka, during their stay at Kabul, would meet high-ranking officers of the Islamic Emirates and would apprise them of their priorities regarding rebuilding and reconstruction process of Afghanistan. The sources further said that they would hold meetings with UN officials and UN-related

agencies as well as other NGOs officers.

Similarly, another 24-member delegation from United States of America is currently staying in Afghanistan.

The sources recalled that on May 18, 1999 an 8-member delegation comprising professors and intellectuals from United States of America signed an agreement with the Vice Chancellor of Kabul University. According to the agreement, now the Kabul University is affiliated with the leading educational institutions of United States. The American professors and intellectuals assured the VC of providing books for various faculties and departments to the Kabul University.

Recently, the French government sent back its Ambassador to Kabul following a visit of a high level French delegation. The sources said that French government also intended to help the war-affected people of Afghanistan.

After the normalcy is returning to Afghanistan, the UNO international staffers returned to Mazar-i-Sharif on May 17 last, who would find out ways and means to resume relief activities in the northern provinces of Afghanistan.

The capture of Bamiyan has not reopened the Taliban northern supply route which goes through central regions to the north through Dare Shekari valley, according to travellers.

Travellers said Bamiyan city was tense and almost empty of its ethnic Hazara residents.

Anwari said Northern Alliance soldiers Saturday attacked the Taliban positions in Hasht Lez and Chahar Nau-rak districts of Samangan.

The Taliban control about 80 per cent of Afghanistan and are fighting the alliance groups headed by ex-defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood. The ruling militia has recently heightened pressure on Masood by bombarding his bases in the northern province of Parwan.

Taliban accused of arresting 600 Shias

News 990525

23/5-99

"People in Herat are living under a constant state of fear," Anwari said. According to Anwari the bodies of 28 men, all of them Hazaras, who were hanged last Thursday and Friday still were hanging to frighten residents.

On Saturday, the Taliban's information minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said eight people were killed by the Taliban soldiers who tried to disturb peace.

Anwari urged human rights groups to investigate his allegations and to stop Taliban's 'atrocities' against minorities in Afghanistan.

The Taliban, who rule 90 per cent of Afghanistan, are battling the opposition alliance on several fronts in a bid to capture the entire country.

Last year, there were reports of mass killings of Shias by Taliban soldiers when they took control of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. The United Nations and witnesses who fled the city said thousands of Shia Muslims were killed.

A year earlier the Taliban accused Shias of slaughtering 2,000 Taliban troops. — AP

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's opposition alliance accused the Taliban rulers of arresting 600 Shia Muslims, known as Hazaras, living in western Herat province.

The opposition alliance, which includes Shia parties, has asked the United Nations and international human rights groups to intercede and investigate their claims of a crackdown by the Taliban on Shia Muslims, often referred to as Hazaras in Afghanistan because of the region they dominate.

The Taliban have denied a crackdown on Hazaras, however, they said that several people were hanged in 'revolt' against the Taliban.

The attacks on Hazaras in western Herat, some 620 kilometers from the capital, Kabul, is an attempt to displace Hazaras in western Afghanistan, said opposition spokesman Hussain Anwari. The reason is to distance Afghanistan's Shia Muslims from neighbouring Iran, which is a Shia majority country.

The Taliban have accused Iran of aiding Afghanistan's opposition Shia Muslims, a charge rejected by Iran.

Taliban charged with Bamiyan massacre

990528

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Initial investigations backed claims that Taliban guards systematically killed innocent civilians after they recaptured the central Afghan city of Bamiyan, Amnesty International said Thursday.

The human rights watchdog also said troops from the opposition Northern Alliance had "beaten brutally" ordinary people in the city and hit out at the international community for witnessing the "massacres of civilians without making any meaningful effort to protect them."

"Prior to the Taliban's most recent recapture of the city of Bamiyan from the opposition forces on 9 May, the majority of people fled to the surrounding mountains with whatever belongings they could take with them," Amnesty said in a statement from London received here.

"According to reports received by Amnesty International, many of those who stayed behind were later the targets of systematic killings by the Taliban guards arriving in the city."

"Estimates of the alleged

killings vary widely but hundreds of men, and in few instances women and children, are reported to have been separated from their families and taken away with no further traces of them," Amnesty said. No spokesmen for either the Taliban or the opposition Northern Alliance were immediately available for comment.

But Amnesty said the reports followed a disturbing pattern similar to abuses committed after the Taliban's capture of the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998. Last year, Amnesty concluded that up to 3,000 ethnic Hazaras were massacred after the Taliban captured the city on August 8.

The opposition Northern Alliance has claimed that hundreds of civilian families were massacred and up to 250 homes were burnt to the ground, in some cases with occupants still inside, after the militia re-took Bamiyan.

But the rights group said: "Amnesty International has also received reports of human rights abuses against the civilian population committed by anti-Taliban

forces during the three-week period (21 April and 9 May) when they were in control of Bamiyan and surrounding areas. "These include severe beating of people suspected of collaborating with the Taliban, arbitrary detention of dozens of civilians, and ill-treatment of their family members," it said.

Amnesty said civilians in Afghanistan had become the target of human rights abuses and there was now a need to establish an international body capable of bringing those responsible for such abuses to justice.

These disturbing reports underline the need for action by the international community to ensure protection of civilian population in Afghanistan, the AI said.

"The organisation is calling for an international body with a clearly demonstrated independent, impartial and competent structure to be set up to investigate the reports of these recent human rights abuses with a view to establishing the facts, identifying the perpetrators and recommending means of bringing them to justice."

13 killed as Taliban jets attack Taloqan: opposition

News 990529

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's Taliban jet fighters swooped in low overhead Friday in northern Taloqan killing 13 people — all of them civilians killed while they slept, said an opposition spokesman.

Seven members of the same family in Taloqan, the provincial capital of Afghanistan's northern Takhar province, were killed when a bomb smashed into their home, said Hussein Anwari, a spokesman for the northern-based alliance.

The alliance is trying to stop the Taliban religious militia from gaining complete control of the country. The Taliban control almost 90 percent of Afghanistan.

There was no immediate comment from the Taliban about the bombing.

According to Anwari, Taliban jets bombed Taloqan three times early Friday. Previously the Taliban have said they were targeting military targets.

The Taliban and the opposition alliance, led by ousted Kabul military chief Ahmed Shah Masood, are fighting on several front lines all of them

north of Kabul, the Afghan capital. — AP

Reuters adds: The Taliban on Friday rejected an Amnesty International report that accused their forces of systematic killings of civilians in the central province of Bamiyan.

"Actually (Amnesty) has no clue about the ongoing situation of Afghanistan. They have no information about it and the report is not true at all," Taliban Information and Culture Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told Reuters in response to the report.

Amnesty said in a report issued on Thursday that the Taliban had carried out systematic massacres of civilians in Bamiyan, the main bastion of the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat. The Taliban retook the region on May 9.

The Amnesty report, which gave no estimate for casualties, said the Taliban had separated hundreds of men, women and children from their families in Bamiyan. The Taliban had also gutted houses belonging to opposition groups in Bamiyan, it said.

"We are astonished by Amnesty's one-sided report," Muttaqi said.

In the same report, Amnesty also accused opposition forces of committing human rights abuses against the civilian population of Bamiyan when it held the area from April 21 to May 9.

The opposition alliance accuses the Taliban, mainly of the dominant Pushtoon ethnic group, of waging an ethnic war in Bamiyan.

Early this week, Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar called on his supporters and the people of Bamiyan to refrain from hostilities.

Brutal human rights violations have been committed by Afghanistan's warring factions during 21 years of fighting.

In May 1997 at least 2,000 Taliban fighters were massacred — some were tossed in wells — by opposition forces in the north of the country.

In retaliation, the Taliban massacred thousands of ethnic Hazaras when they captured the northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif in August last year, Amnesty and the United Nations said.

FP 990524

Pakistan to rebuild stretch of major Afghan highway

ISLAMABAD (APP)

Pakistan and Afghanistan Saturday signed an agreement to rebuild a 10 km stretch of road from Jalalabad to Kabul during the current financial year.

The Afghan side was represented by Maulvi Saaduddin Saeid, deputy minister for Public Works of Afghanistan while a senior official of Pakistan Foreign Office signed the document.

Under the direction of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the country is actively taking part in rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan, said a news release here.

A 10 km stretch of road from Jalalabad to Kabul will be rehabilitated to its original design during the current financial year and more funds will be allocated in the next financial year, it added.

This project will be managed by Public Works Ministry of Afghanistan under technical supervision of National Highway Authority of Pakistan.

Taliban deny new executions

FP 990531

KABUL (APP) - Afghanistan's opposition alliance on Sunday said the ruling Taliban had publicly hanged another 27 people in the western city of Herat following an uprising against the militia.

But the militia dismissed the allegation as "baseless," saying only eight people had been executed following a rebellion in the city bordering Iran.

General Sayed Hussain Anwari, a senior commander of the anti-Taliban northern alliance, said the Taliban had publicly hanged 27 people belonging to the minority Shiite-Muslim community in a sports stadium in Herat last week.

An Afghan Shiite party, the Harakat-e-Islami, on May 21 accused the Taliban of carrying out a "systematic purge" of Herat's Shiite Muslims, killing 25 and wounding 75 others after sealing the border with Iran.

Anwari told reporters the Taliban were still hunting down local Shiite ethnic Hazaras who had taken part in the uprising.

US condemns Taliban's 'revengeful operations'

News 990525

WASHINGTON: United States has expressed concern over "revengeful operations" by the ruling Taliban against Shia Hazara civilians in central Afghanistan, reports VOA.

A report issued by the State Department said that unpleasant but incomplete reports say that hundreds of houses have been burnt, people made hostage, arrested and killed in the area.

The statement has condemned such violations of human rights and called on Afghan warring factions to desist from revengeful operations. —NNI

Osama takes aim at 'immoral' Americans

News 990612

DOHA (AFP) - Osama bin Laden, one of the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" men, called on Muslims to target all Americans and condemned them as "immoral" in a television interview broadcast Thursday.

"They are an immoral people without values," he told the Qatari satellite TV station Al-Jazeera in an interview apparently recorded in Kabul in December.

"Muslims must target every American who fights us directly as well as all those who pay taxes," said bin Laden.

He stands accused of masterminding bomb attacks last year on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people, including 12 Americans.

"The popularity of their president climbs when he kills the innocent and when they commit terrible sins," he added. "A Kalashnikov rifle propped up behind him.

Speaking in Arabic, he recalled that he had always appealed to "strike American forces and the American economy, even when he was fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan."

The bearded bin Laden, sporting a white Afghan turban and a camouflage jacket, noted that the rebel mujahideen, had forced Soviet troops out of Afghanistan. "America is much weaker than Russia, as our brothers who have fought against American forces in Somalia have told us," he said.

In the programme, called 'A Man Against a State, a State Against a Man', he called for an end to the US military presence in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries.

"We demand the liberation of our land from the American enemy," said bin Laden, the 41-year-old alleged terrorist of Saudi origin.

"We believe it is a religious duty for us to fight this (American) occupation (of Islamic countries) with all our might and punish them with the same means they use against us."

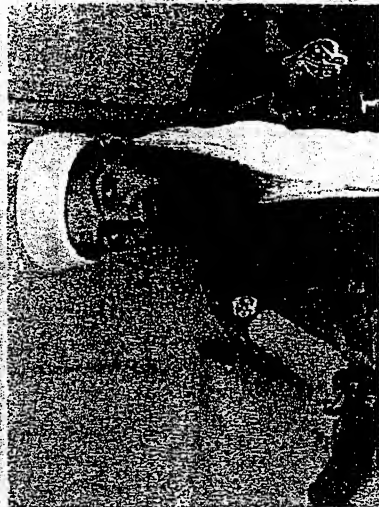
The channel did not specify when the interview was recorded but bin Laden's comments suggested it was in December.

A spokesman for Al-Jazeera said the interview was taped before the Afghan Taliban announced his disappearance

have no impact on Iran. Consolidated Construction would send another team to Afghanistan in July to make a final assessment of the area before a final contract was signed in October. "This will be like a joint venture," Mandarkhel said, adding the Taliban would rent some technical equipment to the company.

Earlier this year, the Taliban's minister of mines and industries visited Athens with a technical delegation to help secure a deal. In Afghanistan, oil is locally produced near the northern city of Sherberghan from four wells initially established by the Soviet Union during its 1979-89 occupation of the country. But Manderkhel said refining was limited.

Militia authorities have been pursuing foreign investment with a focus on the country's untapped natural resources. Negotiations with a South African company to develop a copper deposit at Logar, south of here, began about four months ago. —AFP



DOHA: Osama bin Laden calls in a television interview on all Muslims to target all Americans.—AFP

in February. That sparked speculation about his whereabouts but most reports suggest he is still in Afghanistan.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation

(FBI) added bin Laden to its most wanted list on Monday and offered a reward of five million dollars for information leading to his arrest.

He said the company was keen to work in Afghanistan, irrespective of political considerations. "The progress shown shows their interest," Mandarkhel said, adding extracting oil and gas reserves from Herat would

have no impact on Iran. Consolidated Construction would send another team to Afghanistan in July to make a final assessment of the area before a final contract was signed in October. "This will be like a joint venture," Mandarkhel said, adding the Taliban would rent some technical equipment to the company.

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Militia authorities have been pursuing foreign investment with a focus on the country's untapped natural resources. Negotiations with a South African company to develop a copper deposit at Logar, south of here, began about four months ago. —AFP

Greek company to mount Afghan oil exploration

News 990607

News 990618

Afghan arms depot blown up

KABUL (AFP) - An arms depot blew up on the northern outskirts of the Afghan capital Kabul early Thursday, with the ruling Taliban saying the explosion was caused by an electrical short circuit.

The force of the blast, just before dawn, threw people from their beds and blew out windows in nearby apartments, residents said.

Plumes of smoke and dust filled the early morning sky, they said, and electricity supplies remained cut more than six hours after the explosion.

"It was caused by an electrical short circuit," the Taliban's deputy Interior Minister Mulla Khaksar said.

The explosion brought down a power line on the Kabul electricity grid but there were no civilian casualties, he said.

KABUL: Greek-based Consolidated Construction Company will explore the Taliban-controlled area of Herat in southwestern Afghanistan for oil and gas, senior officials said here Sunday.

Khundai Noor Mandarkhel, a senior advisor to the minister of mines and industries, also said a delegation from the company was recently in Afghanistan to inspect a site in Herat near the Iranian border.

"The draft contract submitted to the Afghan side earlier has been studied. Progress has been made, but there are some reservations that need to be resolved," he said. The veteran oil and gas engineer said the presence of such resources had been verified in the area was yet to be determined.

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Militia authorities have been pursuing foreign investment with a focus on the country's untapped natural resources. Negotiations with a South African company to develop a copper deposit at Logar, south of here, began about four months ago. —AFP

Taliban have destroyed poppy crop, claims UNDCP

Nation 990612

From Our Correspondent

2001.

PESHAWAR - The United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) has claimed that Taliban authorities have destroyed poppy plants spreading over an area of 400 hectares in Kandahar province.

Poppy crop was destroyed after an agreement between the UNDCP and Taliban authorities. The UNDCP is working on a pilot project in that war-affected country with a view to ensure complete eradication of the poppy crop.

The UN weekly update for Afghanistan, in its latest issue states that the UN drug agency has verified destruction of poppy plants over an area of 400 hectares in three districts of the Southern Kandahar province of Afghanistan. According to the agreement, in the pilot project, poppy production in the three districts was to be reduced by 20 per cent in 1999, with the aim of 100 per cent eradication in these areas by

The report reveals that preliminary results of UNDCP's opium survey showed that the target reduction had not been met. Therefore, the community was asked to eradicate some of their poppy fields in order to meet the proposed reduction. Besides others, local authorities, national and international journalists, and Kandahar-based diplomats witnessed the eradication of poppy plants in three districts.

According to the report, as part of the pilot project, UNDCP is collaborating with FAO and other partners in providing assistance which will enable farmers to move away from poppy production. For this purpose, improved seeds are being distributed in the three districts and forty shallow wells have been completed in Maiwand district.

In the light of such efforts, the UNDCP has already convinced the Taliban authorities about impacts of opium pro-

duction and its conversion into heroin. Both the sides had already succeeded in destruction of some 34 heroin manufacturing laboratories in Achin and Shinwar districts of border Nangarhar province.

As a result of 20-year long war, scattered Afghanistan is not only known for production of quality opium but even it has become a safe heaven for the heroin manufacturers and traffickers. All border provinces and regions of Afghanistan are known for production of opium whereas the international drug traffickers, mostly from the Pakistani tribal zone have established heroin manufacturing laboratories.

Besides, UNDCP, the law enforcing agencies from neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, like Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Central Asian Republics and others have concentrated attention on resisting to heroin from Afghanistan to abroad, particularly to the western and Arab world.

Osama uses at least nine Afghan bases

BONN (AFP) - Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, one of the US FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" men, has "at least nine hideouts or training camps in Afghanistan," the German newspaper Die Welt said in its Sunday edition, Welt am Sonntag. The paper said it was in possession of a confidential report submitted by the German intelligence service BND to the government concerning Osama bin Laden and his organisation.

ICRC's 'People on War' project in Afghanistan

Nation 990609

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The "People on War" project of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is being launched soon in Afghanistan to gather the opinion of Afghan people about the ongoing conflict in their war-ravaged country.

The project has already covered nine countries directly affected by armed conflicts. They include Bosnia, Columbia, Somalia, South Africa, Lebanon, Georgia-Abkhazia, Nigeria, El Salvador and the Philippines. It was scheduled to cover Israel and Afghanistan toward the end of the project timeframe from November 1998 to August 1999.

During the course of the project, the opinion of thousands of people in these countries most affected by war were being gathered. They were asked to share their personal experiences, their views on the limits of warfare and how to improve respect for humanitarian law. The project is intended to increase worldwide awareness of the rules that already exist for people's protection in wartime and to encourage discussion of humanitarian law in the context of modern-day conflict.

According to an ICRC publication, the project aimed at determin-

ing whether or not there are shared moral standards that formal law and military practice can build on, to establish whether the idea of placing limits on war has a basis in human nature, and to gain insight into the complex dilemma facing people in the midst of conflict. "Finally, the project will ask what suggestions ordinary people caught in war can make in order to achieve a greater degree of humanity," it added.

The results of the survey will be published along with those from a parallel survey conducted among populations living in peace. Terming the project radical but pragmatic, the ICRC publication said it expected its findings to make a major contribution to the humanitarian agenda of the 21st century. "The project has been initiated by the ICRC, but the crucial parts will come from those who have suffered most in war and know the most about it," according to the ICRC booklet.

The "People on War" project focusing on Afghanistan is expected to begin in Peshawar on June 12, moving on to Jalalabad, Kabul and Charikar, capital of Parwan province controlled by forces of the anti-Taliban alliance led by former Afghan defence minister Ahmad Shah Masud.

Kabul's power network sees signs of repair

Fr 990614

KABUL (AFP) - Next to a blown-up transformer and a bullet-scarred station, workers of the local electricity department and residents dig ditches to run power cables to residential blocks in Kabul's Soviet-built Microrayon Kohna district.

At least 400 families in this prefabricated township, once home of the communist ruling elite, last week got electricity back.

It was restored to their war-shattered homes five years after power facilities were looted in fighting for control of the Afghan capital.

Residents said this had brought new life to the community. They no longer have to burn expensive and dangerous charcoal or diesel fuel inside their small flats.

"Apart from being safer and more convenient, electricity, being several times cheaper than other energy sources, saves us money," said resident Iliasuddin.

Locals pay the equivalent of up to 2.5 US cents for every kilowatt of power as opposed to 20 cents for one litre of diesel.

The ruling Taliban Islamic militia charges foreigners four times more for power.

Iliasuddin, who celebrated the restoration of electricity by taking his young daughters for an ice-cream at the electrified local market, said every flat had contribut-

ed at least 30 dollars to buy spare parts and offer incentives to low-paid government electricians.

During the 1992-1996 factional fighting for control of Kabul, Microrayon Kohna was ruled by the ex-communist general Abdul Rashid Dostam who used it to mount unsuccessful attacks against supporters of former defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood on the other side of a nearby river.

Electricity official Mohammad Ghaus said that even if spare parts were available, it would take months to restore power to all 50 four-storey housing blocks because underground cables, transformers, copper wires and switches had been stolen.

"They used battle-tanks to dig out cables from the ground," he said, adding transformers were dismantled for just 14 kilograms (31 pounds) of copper which was then sold as scrap in Pakistan.

Water and Power Minister Mohammad Eisa Akhund told AFP this was also the case in other parts of Kabul before the Taliban took the capital in 1996.

"Fighting had destroyed 80 per cent of Kabul's power network — we have revived 60 per cent of it," he said.

Locals, however, said only one-third of the city had electricity.

Afghan gypsies back home after 20 years

Nation 990620

KABUL (AFP) - Afghan nomads, the Kuchi, are fighting their way through central Afghanistan in a bid to reclaim lost and disputed land confiscated during occupation by the former Soviet Union.

The offensive began in late May after the ruling Taliban recaptured the strategic city of Bamian from local Hezb-i-Wahdat forces who had staged a series of popular rebellions against militia rule.

Since then, the nomads' bid for lost ground in the surrounding area has been aided by a growing refugee problem from the civil war, and has been boosted by support from authorities in the Taliban's de facto capital of Kandahar.

Critics concede the land grab is based on legitimate Kuchi claims which stretch back more than 100 years.

However, they add that methods employed by the Taliban resemble events in countries like the former Yugoslavia and Indonesia where populations were divided and relocated for political reasons.

'Ethnically, the Kuchi are mostly Pashtoon and so are the Taliban,' one senior western diplomat, who declined to be named, told AFP.

'By pushing them back into the central Hazarajat region the Taliban are establishing a population which can be used as a buffer against the hostility they face from the ethnic Hazaras,' he said.

Hazaras are the dominant ethnic group in central Afghanistan.

As Shi'ites, they share their brand of Islam with Iran and through the Hezb-i-Wahdat they are politically and militarily linked with the Northern Alliance, which controls about 20 percent of the country.

'The Kuchi are different. They have Pashtu bloodlines and are a wild bunch of nomads. Dead hard — nobody, including the Taliban, can contain them. The men are well armed barefoot fighters, and they go where and when they want,' the diplomat said.

In the 1890s King Abdur Rahman Khan granted the Kuchi grazing rights over Hazara lands which were lost after the Soviets introduced land reforms following their invasion in December 1978.

According to the author of 'The Hazaras of Afghanistan,' Sayed Askar Mousavi, the grazing rights led to an encroachment into Hazara land by the

Pashtoon nomads with backing from the Royal Pashtoon courts of Kabul which valued one camel as worth six times more than one Hazara life.

'The following expression has become quite common among Hazaras: 'even a Pashtun dog has a protector but not a Hazara', he writes. One Pashtoon life was worth 1000 camels.

The Kuchi travel by camel train in clans of about 20 people. They live in tents and off the land. In winter they head south while in summer the Kuchi steer their cattle towards greener grazing pastures.

For nomadic herders Hazarajat is prime real estate in the spring but a Kuchi return was thwarted by Afghanistan's descent into civil war after the Soviets pulled out in February 1989.

Independent sources said Kuchi families now arriving in Hazarajat are demanding 20 years back rent from local Hazaras as compensation for losses incurred during Soviet occupation and the ensuing civil war.

'It's a ridiculous claim. None has that sort of money and most of the Hazaras have fled because of the recent fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance,' one foreign aid worker in Islamabad said.

'This created a vacuum and allowed the Kuchi to retake their land and the Taliban would rather have the Kuchi as neighbours because they share a trust through the same ethnic background,' he said.

The civil war is continuing with heavy fighting isolated in the north and central provinces among the predominant Pashtoon Taliban and the Mujihadeen factions who make up the Northern Alliance.

But the alliance is also divided along ethnicity with troops falling into camps controlled by Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen and Tajiks. This division has often proved a source of internal conflict.

Nevertheless the Taliban has won local popular support from most Afghan sides for trying to resolve the long-standing land claims within the 80 percent of Afghanistan it controls.

A spokesman for the ousted Afghan royal family, Sardar Zakria, recently told AFP that solid progress had been made by the Taliban in solving disputed land titles.

Four killed as forest fire rages in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Four people were killed and dozens of houses were gutted as a huge forest fire continued to rage in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Saturday.

The area is held by the Taliban militia which lacks proper facilities to extinguish the fire, it said.

United Nations officials here confirmed the Islamic militia had launched an appeal for international help to bring the fire under control.

The fire erupted in the Darrae Peech forests, 35 kilometer south of Kunar's key city of Asadabad, over the weekend.

Villagers and the ill-equipped local administration have been trying to tame the blaze but it has now spread to nearby hills, the Pakistan based private news service reported.

At least four people were killed when trapped while cutting trees and digging trenches in a bid to contain the inferno, it said.

Sadre Azam, Taliban's top official in Kunar said the fire had displaced some 3,000 people in at least 12 villages, AIP said.

So far thousands of trees have been destroyed and an unspecified number of cattle killed, he said.

'We have no fire fighting arrangements,' Azam said adding the UN and other relief agencies must immediately help the Taliban to prevent further losses.

The forest was known for supplying fine quality timber for buildings and carpentry in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it said.

The cause of the fire which has engulfed tens of kilometers of forest land was not immediately known, AIP said.

One report said it could have been result of some tribal feud in the area, AIP said, adding two local clans had a longstanding land dispute in the region.

APP adds: Pakistan said on Saturday that it will do what it can despite limited resources to help extinguish forest fire raging in the eastern Afghanistan province Kunar, saying it will encourage the UN to come forward.

The ruling Taliban had appealed to the international community for immediate assistance to put out the fire which was spreading fast and causing colossal losses to life and property.

Meanwhile, a UN representative in Islamabad has indicated that the Geneva-based Disaster

Management Branch may come out with assistance to extinguish the forest fire.

Stephanic Bunker, the UN spokesperson on Afghanistan, said the world body's headquarters in New York have been informed of the situation and the Disaster Management Branch may be considering assistance to help overcome the fast-spreading fire.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Islamic Press reported Saturday that the fire claimed lives of four people and gutted dozens of houses, in addition to destroying hundreds of trees.

The four people were reported to have been killed, while trying to cut trees and dig trenches to contain the fire.

Red Cross demands safety guarantees from Taliban

Nation 990620

KABUL: The International Red Cross wants security guarantees from Taliban after six masked men badly beat several Red Cross workers in central Bamian province, said a Red Cross statement issued Saturday.

The Red Cross workers were severely beaten last Wednesday after the vehicle in which they were driving was stopped by six masked men. The men took the workers to Bamian city, about 140 kilometers east of the Afghan capital of Kabul.

According to the statement, the 10 workers - eight Afghan nationals and two expatriate staff - were abducted, beaten and their personal belongings stolen. Their captors also smashed their telecommunications equipment. The Red Cross is not releasing the identities of the victims. Nor is the Red Cross saying what kind of guarantees it is seeking and what it will do if the guarantees are not received.

Also according to the statement the same Red Cross workers had been detained overnight Tuesday by Taliban soldiers, who refused to allow them entry into Bamian city despite letters of permission from the Taliban authorities.

They were released Wednesday and were returning to Kabul when they were kidnapped and beaten, the statement said.

Bamian city has been a sensitive place for the Taliban. Dominated by Afghanistan's ethnic minority Shiite Muslims, Bamian has been a fiercely contested city. The Taliban are now in control but they had to wrest it from Hezb-e-Wahdat fighters, who belong to an opposition alliance. — AP

Afghanistan okays road to Chitral via Kunar

News 990618

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan has given consent for construction of a road via Afghan territory providing all weather access to the residents of Chitral with rest of the country.

An alternative to Lowari tunnel, the project envisaged construction of 132 km road from Nowapass via Arandu (Kunar province of Afghanistan) to Mirkhan (Chitral), official sources said. Chitral, a home of over 3.5 million people, remains cut off from rest of the country and food supplies suspended for 4 to 5 months during winter because of massive snowfall in this mountainous region, at an altitude of over 10,000 feet.

The agreement with Afghanistan to this effect was announced by Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif besides a development grant of one billion rupees, during his visit to Chitral on June 1. The construction of the proposed road, passing through Panah Kot, Asmar, Asadabad and Bajaur, would greatly benefit Pakistani citizens besides an equal number of Afghan refugees settled in the largest district of the NWFP, bordering Afghanistan. The estimated cost of the project was around Rs 700 million.

Government agencies and businessmen have to pile up stocks of essential commodities to meet the local

requirements during snow season when all land routes within the country are blocked, said Shahzada Mohiuddin, MNA from Chitral.

He said access to Chitral is only possible during winter by air only that too subject to weather condition. It becomes extremely difficult for poor people to afford hoteling at Rawalpindi or Peshawar waiting for weather clearance to reach home. Narrating an interesting example, he said, once to overcome shortage, salt worth Rs 5000 was airlifted from Rawalpindi to Chitral at a cost of Rs 50,000.

He said work on Lowari tunnel project was started in 70s to deal with this problem, but the project was abandoned after 1900 feet excavation. Later subsequent governments attempted but left unattended as the project was not found feasible. Presently the cost of this project has escalated to around Rs 20 billion, he added.

Shahzada Mohiuddin said he was very particular about development of roads and establishment of power stations in the area. He said the development grant announced by the Prime Minister would be utilised for improving and black topping of different road networks.—APP

Diarrhoea outbreak kills dozens in Afghanistan

News 990624

ISLAMABAD: Severe diarrhoea outbreak in different provinces of Afghanistan including Ghazni, Kabul, and Kandhar has resulted in death of dozens.

The joint mission of WHO, the Ministry of Public Health, Medicine Sans Frontiers and Ibsina investigated the area in response to the reports received from the government of Ghazni as well as the Shuhada Organisation and Ghazni Public Health.

In addition to the inquiry and collection of specimens, the team brought drugs and supplies to the local clinic run by Shuhada Organisation and provided training to clinical staff.

Leaflets and public announcements were distributed to provide health education to the villagers about control of dehydration, use of Ots and chloramine tablets to purify the water and other preventive measures.

In Kabul the Ministry of Public Health had called an emergency

meeting of the Cholera Task Force this week to inform that severe diarrhoea and suspected cholera broke out in Kabul.

The task force members include MSF, SCF, IFRC and MOPH who are reporting cases of diarrhoea from their health facilities and WHO, UNICEF, ICRC, Habitat, CAWS, MRRD and the municipality are participating in teams for investigation, health education, and water chlorination. In the past two weeks, 10 Kabul facilities reported three adult deaths among the 108 adults hospitalised with diarrhoea. Two more adults with acute watery diarrhoea died on their way to the hospital. A total of 2,177 cases of acute watery diarrhoea have been reported in Kabul so far.

In Spin Boldak district of Kandahar, 189 cases of acute diarrhoea were reported, and 4 adults, 10 children aged between 5-15 years and 22 children under the age of five have died.—APP

Anti-Taliban commanders behind Jalalabad attack

News 990619

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Despite claims by Taliban authorities that the rockets which hit parts of Jalalabad city recently were fired accidentally, it appears that anti-Taliban commanders active in the area were behind this attack.

The four rockets landed in Jalalabad on the June 14-15 night and killed a couple and their two children. One of the rockets which fell near the Jalalabad airport did not explode. Of the remaining three, one hit a house killing and injuring its inmates and two slammed into the old military headquarters nearby without causing any significant damage. Incidentally, the military headquarters was destroyed last year when its ammunition dump was blown up in a series of explosions.

Mulla Sadre Azam, acting governor of Nangarhar province, claimed in the provincial headquarters,

Jalalabad, that the battery of rockets accidentally went off causing the incident. He did not agree with the observation that anti-Taliban commanders fighting against the ruling Taliban in neighbouring Kunar province could be behind the rocket attack.

Earlier, the same Sadre Azam had said the rockets could have come from a distance of about 20 kilometres east of Jalalabad. That in itself was an admission that the rockets may have been fired from the mountains of Kunar, where former mujahideen commanders Jehandad Khan and Hazrat Ali have occasionally waged guerrilla attacks against the Taliban since the fall of Jalalabad on September 12, 1996. The former was one of the strongest mujahideen commanders in Kunar and was affiliated with late Maulana Jamilur Rahman's Ahle Hadith faction.

Hazrat Ali, on the other hand, was a member of the ruling mu-

jahideen Shura in Jalalabad and wielded considerable power in Nangarhar province.

Both the commanders came close to former Afghan defence minister, Ahmad Shah Masood, in recent years and were reportedly receiving military and monetary assistance from him. In return, they tried to harass the Taliban in Kunar by blocking roads, cutting off supplies and taking people hostage. Certain other anti-Taliban commanders were said to be active in upper Kunar and in the several remote valleys in the province. The Taliban are also facing some resistance in upper reaches of the neighbouring Laghman province.

Sadre Azam's argument is untenable because rockets fired accidentally are unlikely to land in or near military targets like Jalalabad airport and the former army headquarters. Moreover, his two statements issued with some gap between them were contradictory.

Sadre Azam, who is virtually Nangarhar's governor officiating for the permanent incumbent Mulla Mohammad Kabir since the latter's appointment as secretary of the ruling council in Kabul, was apparently trying to control the damage by putting up the theory that the rockets fell on Jalalabad due to an accident.

However, not many people would believe him and there is a growing feeling that Jalalabad for the first time after its capture by the Taliban in September 1996 has become vulnerable to opposition rocket attacks. Kabul was already being pounded by rockets fired by Masood's forces and now military commanders owing allegiance to him have adopted the same tactics in Jalalabad. R

ocketing may not be a sound military tactic but it does terrorise the population and embarrass the authority in control of the targeted place.

Afghanistan foreign aid workers will be protected: Taliban chief

Nation 990624

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar has issued a decree to ensure the protection of foreign workers amid rising security concerns in Afghanistan, radio Shariat reported Wednesday.

The decree came after several security breaches including last week's beating up of two foreign and eight local residents working for the International

Committee of the Red Cross in the central province of Bamiyan.

"Perpetrators of such deeds — Taliban or non-Taliban — will be given a term of five years in jail," the radio quoted the religious militia leader as saying.

Omar also advised officials to make sure such "undesirable deeds" were not repeated.

The Red Cross, a major aid agency in the war-torn country, scaled down its operations only to life-saving activities after its staff were beaten up and robbed of their belongings on their way to Bamiyan on an assessment mission.

"It seems that this is the plot of the opposition and the enemies who have disguised themselves as Taliban trying to show to the world that foreign institutions are not safe in Afghanistan," the decree said.

Omar told foreign aid workers to live by the rules and the militia regulations.

In Bamiyan and surrounding areas in central Hazarajat region, foreign aid workers are hesitant to take the Bamiyan highway.

Taliban's governor of Kabul at a meeting with a Red Cross official Tuesday said the ruling militia had taken steps to ensure the safety of aid workers, the radio added.

"We are always prepared for your security measures and you should not worry at all," the governor was reported as saying.

Besides the UN and the Red Cross, there are more than a dozen other international aid agencies working to help the impoverished population.

Last year the agencies were all ordered out of Kabul after they defied a Taliban ruling to shift to a dilapidated compound outside the city.

The United Nations also evacuated from Kabul after an Italian officer Colonel Carmine Carlo was shot dead in August following the US cruise missile attacks on suspected terrorist camps run by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden in southern Afghanistan.

US firm to restore Afghan telecom network

PESHAWAR (NNI) - The representative of the US firm, TSI says the firm wants to solve problems of the Afghan people in the field of modern telecommunications in collaboration with the Taliban's ministry for communication, reports VOA.

Foreign and local workers of the TSI are these days busy along with officials of Taliban's telecommunication ministry to lay telephone lines to establish communication links between Afghanistan and the rest of the world next week.

The TSI representative in Kabul, Ihsanullah Aryanazai said after signing an agreement for repair and promotion of the telecommunication system and installation of mobile telephones in Afghanistan, they have started work. "We are creating channels for Afghanistan in the international satellite system and ensuring Afghanistan's right in world telecommunications. We have been devising codes for different cities of Afghanistan and setting up telephone installations in Kabul and Kandahar", he said.

These things would be done during the current month. Besides, survey has been completed for installing dish antennae in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Khost and these antennae would be installed there within next two to two and a half months", he added.

About mobile telephones, he said an agreement was signed between his company and the Taliban government on GSM technology. We are in contact with eight leading world companies, including Motorola, Nokia and Siemens. These firms are busy in preparing reports about introducing GSM technology in Afghanistan. He said the Afghan Mobile Company, to be jointly run by the Telecommunication Ministry and the TSI, would be responsible for provision of mobile telephones, he said.

The system will start immediate working in Kabul and Kandahar.

Besides, installation of dish antennae in Kabul will be completed in one week time, following which the 20,000 telephone subscribers of Kabul will be able to call any part of the world from their houses and shops. International public call offices will also be installed in different cities of the country", he said.

After Kabul and Kandahar, the telephone system of Nangarhar province will be activated to link it with Kabul and foreign countries, he said adding that another firm, Afghan Development Company Limited (ADCL) in London has shown its interest to make investment in Afghanistan. A number of its delegations, he said, have come to Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Shibarghan, Sar-e-Pul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Baghlan for reviving different industrial units and mines. He said the plan to this effect was now under the consideration of Taliban government and after approval, the work would be undertaken in next six months.

Breakthrough as donors pledge support to Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (Internews) - In a major boost for peace hopes and the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, an international conference of donors has reiterated support for the country's development.

An official of the United Nations Mission on Afghanistan in Islamabad, when contacted, told Internews on Wednesday that the UN Special Envoy for Afghanistan has confirmed that international donors had given assurances that they would continue to fund UN aid programmes for Afghanistan.

Lakhdar Brahimi speaking at the end of the two-day donors' conference in the Swedish capital of Stockholm, however, conceded that there has been a disappointing response to the United Nations annual appeal to the international community for funds.

community for funds.

"The donors remain concerned about several issues, including human rights and terrorism," Brahimi said, referring to curbs on women and the ruling Taliban's support wanted alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden.

Brahimi also announced that Sweden, Japan and Canada would be sending delegations to Afghanistan shortly along with UN representatives to discuss their concerns with the Taliban.

Aid agencies withdrew from Afghanistan last year over several disputes with the Taliban and have only recently begun returning.

During the conference, the donors and aid agencies reviewed humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and programmes that have been curtailed following a series of dis-

putes with the Taliban authorities.

A spokesman for the Afghanistan Embassy in Islamabad when contacted stressed on the donor countries to fulfil their "moral obligations" by helping.

"It is not fair if Afghanistan suffers from extreme poverty and the world just observes its sufferings," he said, requesting that he not be named.

While appreciating the donors' help, he said despite their valuable assistance to Afghanistan, "the volume and level of the aid has not been sufficient to relieve the sufferings of the country."

"Afghanistan is a country that has perhaps suffered more than any other country in the world and sustained significantly more casualties, damage and destruction than any where else," he said.

UN claims Afghanistan to be cleared of mines by 2009

990625

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - The United Nations hopes that the war-ravaged Afghanistan would be cleared of deadly land mines by 2009 if funds for the de-mining campaign is received without any hindrance.

According to the UN estimates, there have been 866 square kilometers contaminated areas with land mines in Afghanistan.

A total of 477 square kilometer area was considered as high priority area that include grazing land, residential places, roads and agriculture land. Some 166 square kilometer area of 477-kilometer high priority area has been cleared of mines and campaign is continuing to clear the rest.

The Afghan Campaign to Ban Landmines (ACBL) is promoting awareness of the international community regarding the mine problem faced by the Afghan people, a senior official in the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) Qadeem Tariq said.

The ACBL is persuading the warring factions to stop using landmines and assisting in fund-raising for mine action activities and victims' assistance programs in Afghanistan. The ACBL was established in 1995 as a non-political, non-governmental and national forum struggling for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Besides, working for mine clearing drive in the war-shattered Afghanistan, the ACBL is extending support to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). The Coordinating Office of the ACBL is the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA). ACBL started with a very limited number of NGOs as members. However, the number of member agencies has now reached around 40. These NGOs are actively operative in Afghanistan.

Despite being at its preliminary stage, ACBL is playing an important role in achieving a total ban on the production, stockpiling, trade and use of anti-personnel landmines at national and international level. The achievements of the ACBL, so far, are highly promising.

ACBL has collected about 300,000 petitions from Afghan refugees now in camps in Pakistan as well as those in various provinces inside Afghanistan. The petitions are aimed at obtaining support of the common people for mine ban campaign and have been used at national and international level to demonstrate that common people are against landmines and demand a total and comprehensive ban on landmines.

The chair of ACBL has met almost all political and military leaders in different parts of the country

in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999. In order to encourage them not to use landmines in their factional war. All the leaders have declared their support to ACBL and its objectives. In 1997, four mine awareness and advocacy workshops were convened by ACBL in various cities of Afghanistan. In 1998, a national seminar was held in Kabul where many NGO staff, community/religious leaders, government officials, scholars and mine victims attended. The workshops and seminars proved to be an effective means of projecting the problem of landmines at national and international level, as the proceedings were extensively echoed by the Kabul radio, as well. In order to mobilize Afghans to be directly involved in the campaign against landmines and to attract attention of the international community and media to the problem of landmines in Afghanistan, the ACBL successfully observed the Afghan Mine Action and Awareness Month (AMAAAM) in 1996, 1997 and 1998. During this period, ACBL successfully carried out a wide range of activities in Kabul, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Paktika, Paktia, Kandahar and Herat provinces in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan. In 1998, a two-bus caravan of mine victims traveled from Jalalabad, and passing through many small and large towns, it reached Kandahar.

'Last Jew' in Afghanistan disappears

Nation 990623

JERUSALEM (AFP) - A man purported to be the last Jew living in Afghanistan, has disappeared after being prevented by the ruling Islamic movement Taliban from leaving the country, the *Haaretz* newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Haaretz said Yitzhak Levy vanished in the past three weeks along with a second Jew, Aharon Siman-Tov, who travelled to Kabul in hopes of bringing him out of the country.

Levy, said to be in his sixties, was described by Jews of Afghani descent as the last known Jew residing in Afghanistan.

He lived in an old synagogue in Kabul, taking care of the Torah scroll and other religious articles.

According to information received by Afghani-Jewish activists in the United States, Levy lived peacefully alongside his Muslim neighbors for years but began encountering trouble after the fundamentalist Taliban movement seized power in 1996.

Taliban followers demanded Levy convert to Islam and beat him when he refused, *Haaretz* quoted the activists as saying.

When news of Levy's plight reached the US-based activists, Siman-Tov travelled to Afghanistan, apparently through Pakistan, to convince Levy to leave, *Haaretz* said.

When the Taliban learned of the plan, the militia arrested both Levy and Siman-Tov, who have not been heard from since, it said.

Both men have relatives in Israel and the foreign ministry here is investigating the reports of their disappearance.

The Jewish presence in what is today Afghanistan dates back to the Middle Ages when tens of thousands of Jews lived in the region.

When Israel was created in 1948, the community numbered only 5,000 and most of these later emigrated to the Jewish state.

Taliban too bad for their own good, says Sartaj

Natou 990705

LONDON (Internews) - Pakistan Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz has said the Afghan Taliban's interpretation of Islam is not acceptable even in Islamic states that apply the Shariah.

"I believe their interpretation of Islam is not acceptable even where Shar'ia is the law," Aziz said in an interview to the London-based Arabic magazine *Al-Wasat*. He was mentioning the negative points of Taliban, as seen by the world.

"Those who went to Afghanistan to fight the Russians were motivated by a strong religious faith. But all that changed when they moved from jihad to official responsibility and faced the strong reality," he said.

"It seems from my personal observations that the Taliban leaders are not prepared to slacken until they have secured full control of the whole of Afghanistan. The Taliban's failure in dealing with the foreign media is also a negative point," he said.

"On the other hand," he pointed out, "the Afghan opposition abroad has been successful in discrediting the Taliban by relating stories, albeit exaggerated ones, about the movement."

Moreover, Sartaj Aziz added, the Taliban do not have the experience or the ability to convey a positive or even a realistic picture of their situation.

"For example, when Taliban announced they had set up a committee to investigate the incidents that followed the occupation of Mazar-e-Sharif, we in the Pakistan Foreign Ministry needed three days to obtain clarification about the committee and its role."

"This would not have taken long had there been well-trained media teams

that could deal with such incidents and issues. But, the Iranian experiment under Ayatollah Khomeini also passed through a similar phase, and it took several years to adjust," he explained.

He said in the case of Taliban supreme Mullah Omar, no one knows him outside Afghan borders.

About Pakistan's role in efforts to reach a common ground between Afghan opposition and the Taliban, Aziz said Islamabad had made some moves towards Central Asia and Iran.

Responding to charges that the Taliban govt backs of protects terrorism by hosting persons like Osama bin Ladin, Aziz said when a country is left without authority or government for a period of 10 years, many outlaws are bound to use it as a safe haven.

Asked if the United States had requested Pakistan to expel Osama bin Ladin from Afghanistan or deliver him to it, Sartaj said Islamabad's ability to cooperate with the United States regarding its request on Ladin was limited.

"There is huge US interest in this subject. The Americans requested us to use our relations in order to reach some result on this subject. We fight terrorism and we have had some experience in delivering wanted persons or cooperating in their arrest."

"But, Osama bin Ladin does not exist in our territory," Sartaj Aziz added. To a question, Sartaj Aziz said India's stand on the issue of Kashmir is not flexible and New Delhi should stop the current escalation or be ready to face unforeseen consequences. "I repeat my call to the Indian side to stop the escalation out of fear that its repercussions could lead to steps with unforeseen consequences."

sequences," he said in an interview to London-based Arabic magazine *Al-Wasat* in its latest issue.

"Pakistan's call for calming down the situation does not imply fear because we are sure of our armed forces' ability to protect our borders," Aziz emphasised.

Talking about Islamabad's efforts defuse the Kashmir situation, Aziz said Pakistan had all along been drawing the world's attention that non-resolution of the Kashmir crisis would lead to great tension between the two countries.

"We have also said that the people on the Indian side of Kashmir have the right to resort to all kinds of methods in order to achieve their aims. There are clear UN resolutions giving Kashmiris the right to determine their own destiny," he said.

"This election climate might encourage some Indian officials to tense up the situation and call for a major Indian military offensive," he said.

"The large number of casualties among the Indian forces in this phase could also make it difficult for Indian party leaders to accept the present climate," the Foreign Minister warned. "This stand is not flexible. They continue saying that Kashmir is a part of India and that there is nothing to be discussed there. Our reply to them is that there isn't a single country in the world that recognises Kashmir as a part of India," Aziz made it clear.

"We said: If Kashmir is indeed a part of India, why do you need to deploy 700,000 soldiers there; or seven Indian soldiers for every Kashmiri? The number of those killed in the past 10 years exceeded 60,000."

Taliban appeal for medical aid as cholera epidemic feared

Natou 990705

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban on Sunday issued an urgent appeal for international medical aid to deal with a major cholera epidemic which they said could hit up to 48,000 people.

Minister for Public Health Mulla Mohammad Abbas said 6,359 cases of acute diarrhoeal disease had been reported in recent weeks resulting in 55 deaths, and all were being treated as suspected cholera.

"The epidemic of cholera has occurred across Afghanistan in populated areas," he said in a statement.

"The main source of the cholera is human waste in the water system that has been destroyed by two decades of war," he said.

"We request ... for the world to send supplies to use in the struggle against and control of this epidemic."

He said the epidemic was expected to hit up to 8,000 people in the months ahead in each of the six regions of Afghanistan where the outbreak was at its worst.

"Some of the strains of cholera have shown a resistance to traditional drugs,"

the minister added.

"The conclusions were based on eight test samples of suspected cholera which were sent to international laboratory testing by the World Health Organisation. Five were positive."

In previous years local authorities working with the United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have managed to control cholera outbreaks, which are fairly common during Afghanistan's summer.

However, Abbas said an unusually hot spring coupled with a further deterioration of the country's crippled water and sewage network had resulted in an earlier-than-usual outbreak.

Abbas said international help was needed in two forms.

Medical supplies, particularly the drugs tetracyclin, hestacyclin and ferazolidine, were needed to combat cholera strains that were proving resistant to traditional drugs, he said.

Secondly, repairs to Afghanistan's water supplies, sewage systems and waste management were urgently needed.

An experienced local taskforce of 435 doctors and nurses with a further 260 volunteers from the UN and NGOs had been working throughout the winter in preparation for the annual cholera outbreak, Abbas said.

But the scale had caught authorities off-guard.

Afghanistan has been wracked by war for some 20 years, with a home-grown insurgency against the post-1979 Soviet occupation succeeded by a debilitating civil war in the 1990s.

The Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic militia, seized the capital Kabul in September 1996 and now control around 80 percent of Afghanistan, with an opposition alliance holding north-eastern regions.

Relations between the Taliban and foreign aid organisations have been strained.

Last month Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar issued a decree to ensure the protection of foreign aid workers after two foreign and eight local Red Cross personnel were beaten up.

'Osama moves to new base in Afghanistan'

News 990705

LONDON: Osama bin Laden, the Saudi dissident, has moved into a new base near Jalalabad in Afghanistan, the Observer newspaper reported Sunday.

Bin Laden moved two months ago into an old collective farm in the village of Farm Adda, a few miles south of Jalalabad near the Pakistan border, the weekly reported.

It said a western intelligence source and an Afghan military commander had confirmed a report that Osama was seen Tuesday in a convoy of trucks on the Farm Adda Road.

The report said Osama had also moved part of his operation into a nearby former military base known as Tora Bora. Bin Laden has fallen out with his former hosts, the Taliban religious militia that rules Afghanistan, and some reports have suggested he was headed elsewhere — Somalia, Chechnya, even Iraq.

US State Department spokesman James P Rubin last week refused to say whether American intelligence knows Osama's whereabouts, but called him "a wanted man" whose "day will come".

Osama is accused in a trial in New York of planning the August 7 attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which he has been denying.

The United States last week re-

newed a warning that Osama may be preparing to strike as the anniversary of bombings approaches.

Afghanistan's Deputy Interior Minister Mulla Mohammad Khakzar said then that the Taliban did not know Osama's whereabouts and he repeated the Taliban's accusation that the United States is obsessed with him and blame him for any attack or suspected attack on US interests.

Afghan officials were not immediately available Sunday to comment on the Observer's report. The United States briefly closed six of its African embassies — in Gambia, Togo, Liberia, Namibia, Senegal and Madagascar — on June 24, saying they were under surveillance by "suspicious individuals". Four days later, all except the Madagascar mission were reopened. The State Department did not say why the Madagascar embassy would remain shut. Security at all six has been enhanced, although they remain the targets of suspicious surveillance, the State Department said.

US embassies worldwide were placed on a heightened state of alert in June and Osama was put on the FBI's 10 most wanted list. Fifteen defendants have been charged by a US federal court in New York in the two bombings. Nine, including Osama, are still at large. —AP

ISLAMABAD: Fearing the US attack on Afghanistan, Arab families living near the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad have shifted to other safe places after press reports that Osama bin Laden is residing the town, witnesses said Tuesday.

The travellers, coming to Peshawar, say they saw Arab families leaving Faran Hadah, five kilometres south of Jalalabad for unknown places.

A British newspaper reported earlier this month that Osama is residing at Faran Hadah near Jalalabad, the capital city of Ningrahar province.

Osama had been residing in Faran Hadah several years ago along with other Arab families. However, later, he

shifted to somewhere in Khost province. When Osama left Faran Hadah, some Arab families moved to other areas but around 10 families stayed there. Now they are also going to other areas. A senior Taliban spokesman Maulvi Wakil Ahmed advised this month that Osama is still in Afghanistan and is living under the protection of a high level commander.

Earlier this year Taliban had announced that the Saudi dissident is residing and that they have no information about his whereabouts.

A Taliban newspaper last week quoted Supreme Leader Mulla Muhammad Omar as saying that the student militia would not surrender to

the US demand for the extradition of Osama bin Laden.

Omar said Taliban would welcome to embrace martyrdom but would never succumb to the demands for expulsion of the Saudi dissident.

The statement came following the US State Department warning to the American citizens in Pakistan asking them to be much careful as the Afghan extremists are planning to attack US interests in Pakistan.

The United States has been demanding expulsion of the Saudi dissident as Washington has accused him of involvement in the US embassies bombings in Kenya and Tanzania last year, which killed more than 200 people, including 12 Americans. —NNI

Afghans flee in fear of US attack

News 990721

Osama moves to new Afghan base

News 990705

LONDON (AFP) - Suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden has moved to the hills of eastern Afghanistan from where he continues to operate his international network, Observer weekly reported Sunday.

It said he was living in a former Soviet collective farm in the village of Farmihadda, south of Jalalabad, which he bought from the Taliban militia last October.

He moved in two months ago, is reportedly protected by his own security and Taliban fighters, and was seen in Jalalabad as recently as Tuesday.

The Observer cited local landowners, aid workers, a military commander and security service informants and western security sources for its story.

Saudi millionaire Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi multi-millionaire, is charged by the US with masterminding the near-simultaneous bombings of US embassies

in in Tanzania and the Kenyan capital Nairobi on August 7, 1998.

The attacks killed 224 people and left thousands injured.

The US has offered a five-million-dollar reward for information leading to his capture.

According to the report, bin Laden has survived two recent assassination attempts, while intelligence sources in Islamabad said a third was discovered six weeks ago and all those involved were killed.

The paper said Osama bin Laden came to know the area of eastern Afghanistan well while fighting against the Russians who used to occupy the Afghanistan.

Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden moves constantly for security reasons, but a serious medical condition and back problems are said to be making travel more difficult.

Artificial limbs workshop's closure pains Afghans

News 990705

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The closure of a workshop for making artificial limbs and shoes for disabled at Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan has exposed people to innumerable difficulties.

The workshop was run by Sandy Gall Appeal for Afghanistan, set up by noted British television journalist and named after him. Lack of funding from its foreign donors apparently forced the NGO to close down the workshop sometime back.

Afghan Disabled Association for Eastern Afghanistan's president Mohammad Jaafar Tawakkali told The News the disabled were suffering also due to closure of another NGO, Ibrar, in Jalalabad and the difficulties were being faced by the WFP to continue providing support to bakeries which gave subsidised bread to the people. "The closure of the Sandy Gall Appeal for Afghanistan workshop was a big setback for the disabled in the three

eastern provinces of Afghanistan — Nangarhar, Kunar and Laguman. Now we cannot get proper shoes and other artificial limbs made locally.

Tawakkali, himself a disabled, said there were about 9,000 disabled people in eastern Afghanistan, including men, women and children. He said a sizeable number of women were also wounded in the Afghan war either in bombing, shelling or in landmine blasts and were disabled but they remain at home and could not be seen often. He said Taliban-led Afghan government could not provide them much support due to lack of resources. "We appreciate the peace and security brought by the Taliban. We also understand the Taliban authorities did not have enough resources to help disabled. But once durable peace is restored in Afghanistan and the Taliban even then don't give special attention to the disabled, then we would be forced to protest," he warned.

US imposes sanctions against Taliban govt

News 990707

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bill Clinton has imposed financial sanctions against the Taliban religious militia that rules Afghanistan in retaliation for its reputed support of Osama bin Laden, the alleged international terrorist.

Clinton signed an executive order Monday imposing the sanctions. Bin Laden was placed on the FBI's "Top Most Wanted List" last month with a \$5 million reward offered for information leading to his arrest.

"To this day, bin Laden and his network continue to plan new attacks against Americans without regard for the innocence of their intended victims or for those non-Americans who might get in the way of his attack," Clinton said in a written statement.

He said his executive order "will deepen the international isolation of the Taliban, limit its ability to support terrorist networks and demonstrate the need to conform to the accepted norms of international behavior."

In practical terms, the impact of the sanctions probably will be modest, a senior administration official acknowledged, speaking on condition of anonymity. It is not clear what assets might be affected, the official said, but declared that the action sends a clear mes-

sage that the United States will not tolerate those who shelter international terrorists.

U.S. trade with Afghanistan totaled \$1.3 billion in 1998, United States has sanctions in effect covering more than two dozen countries, from Angola to Zambia, accounting for half of the world's population.

The order freezes any property of the Taliban within U.S. jurisdiction. It also prohibits transactions and trade with the Taliban or in territory controlled by the Taliban, preventing any U.S. investment.

The United States demands that the Taliban expel bin Laden to the United States for trial or to a third country where he would face justice for alleged crimes.

The Clinton administration accuses bin Laden of masterminding the Aug. 7, 1998, bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed more than 200 people and injured thousands.

Washington says bin Laden is still hiding in Afghanistan. Others suggest he is on his way elsewhere - Somalia, Chechnya, even Iraq - preferably somewhere gripped by anarchy and rife with anti-U.S. sentiment.

Taliban leaders have insisted they do not know where he is.

Taliban, Masood brace for final showdown

News 990707

By Behroz Khan

PESHAWAR: Taliban Islamic movement and commander Ahmad Shah Masood-led opposition brace for a final showdown amidst recruitment drive in the areas controlled by both the sides to rush fresh reinforcements to the front line in northern Afghanistan.

Staffers of international NGO working in Afghanistan, Taliban officials as well as Afghans reaching Peshawar confirmed the renewed drive for recruitment in eastern, southern and south-western provinces of the country. "Young people are asked to report to Taliban offices in Nangarhar provinces," informed a source working in an NGO, who asked not be named.

However, a Taliban official pleading anonymity dispelled the impression that Afghans were being taken to the front line against their will. "We have always welcomed those willing to fight for the defence of their country and removing obstacles which hinder the implementation of Shariah in the rest of Afghanistan," said the Taliban official. Afghans reaching Pakistan from Zabul and other south-western

provinces also confirmed reports that a large number of fighters were on their way to the front line to support Taliban against Masood.

Sources closed to Ahmad Masood also claimed that the former Afghan defence minister was busy in strengthening his defenses in

Takhaar, Badakhshan and Parwan provinces against the impending Taliban assault. Masood, the sources informed, had recently blown up the only bridge at Bangi area which links his strong military bases in Takhaar province with the Taliban held Kunduz province. Journalists visiting Masood controlled parts of Afghanistan said Masood had reinforced his defence and was awaiting the Taliban assault.

Taliban authorities, the sources said, had contacted elders of the tribes and clans in Nangarhar, Logar, Paktia, Paktika and Khost provinces to send 'volunteers' to Kabul and Jalalabad. Tribesmen in Paktia had brokered an agreement with the Taliban at the time of the seizure and control of the province by the students militia that volunteers would be provided to fight along the Taliban whenever the need be. Opposition sources claimed that Taliban had assembled thousands of fighters in Kabul and Jalalabad during the last one month.

In the Taliban-controlled Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand, Farah and Nemroz provinces, families have been asked to 'volunteer' one person each to perform military services for two months. "Most of the Afghans refuse to return to Afghanistan because they risk being sent to front line," said an Afghan from Zabul. Sources in Taliban ranks said that keeping in view Masood's stubbornness, the only option for restoration of peace was to twist his (Masood's) arms.

On the other hand, commander Masood has taken steps to thwart Taliban plans by removing 'suspected' commanders from the front line in the north of Kabul and deploying more troops in the Topkhana district of Badakhshan province. Commander Mullah Taj Muhammad, affiliated with Ustad Sayyaf, has been removed from his position in Parwan province due to suspicion that he was in contact with Taliban.

Masood, the sources said, had also brought changes in the military leadership in Barak district of Badakhshan following an abortive local uprising by Taliban. Experts believe that Masood was facing a tough job in keeping his supply routes open for transportation of arms and ammunition to the front line. Taliban sources claimed Masood lost a big quantity of ammunition after the barge carrying the arms from Tajikistan drowned in Oxus River recently. Masood claimed the barge was ferrying food stuff and not weapons.

Afghan rivals fight battles in Samangan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Taliban militia and opposition Northern Alliance troops fought battles Wednesday in the northern Afghan province of Samangan a day after peace talks in Uzbekistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The combatants used heavy artillery in the fighting, the private information agency said, quoting sources in the opposition alliance. Around a dozen troops from both sides were killed and dozens were injured in the clashes, the Peshawar-based agency said.

The opposition claimed to have beaten back a series of attacks by the Taliban in the area.

The adversaries have continually clashed in Samangan over the past few months.

On Tuesday, Taliban and opposition officials ended two days of talks in Tashkent agreeing to discuss a ceasefire, prisoners' swap and dates for a fresh round of peace negotiations with their leaders.

The talks were held within the so-called "six-plus-two" group which is made up of Afghanistan's neighbours China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, besides Russia and the United States.

The group has been working with UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to end Afghanistan's seven-year civil war.

Pakistan places Tashkent Declaration on public record

Nation 990723

ISLAMABAD (Internews) - The government of Pakistan on Thursday officially placed the text of the Six-plus-Two group's Tashkent Declaration, signed by it earlier this week in the Uzbekistan capital, on public record.

The Six-plus-Two meeting on Afghanistan was attended by deputy foreign ministers of China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, the United and the United Nations secretary-general's special envoy on Afghanistan.

The meeting ended with the signing on July 19 of the Tashkent Declaration and according to the government record, the following is the text of the Declaration:

Title: "Tashkent Declaration on the Fundamental Principles of a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan."

Text: "The deputy ministers of foreign affairs of the Six-plus-Two group, consisting of the states bordering on Afghanistan - the People's Republic of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan - as well as the Russian Federation and the United States of America, having met in [the Uzbek capital] Tashkent on 19th-20th July 1999 with the participation of Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi, having considered the situation in Afghanistan, being sincere friends of the Afghan people and wishing peace and prosperity for Afghanistan, have affirmed the following principles. "We express the profound concern of our governments at the continuing military confrontation in Afghanistan which is posing a serious and growing threat to regional and international peace and security.

"We remain committed to a peaceful political settlement of the Afghan conflict, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations, and we, in particular, recall the "points for discussion" and the "issues on which general understanding have been achieved," adopted earlier by the countries of the Six-plus-Two group.

"We confirm that the United Nations, as a universally recognised mediator, must continue to play a central and impartial role in international efforts to achieve a peaceful solution of the Afghan conflict and we confirm again our full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Afghanistan and the work of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. "We confirm again our firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan.

"We express our profound concern about the violations of human rights, including those of ethnic minorities and women and girls, as well as the violations of international humanitarian law that are taking place in Afghanistan.

"We are deeply worried about the

steady increase in the cultivation, production and illicit trafficking of narcotics and the illegal sale of arms, which have far-reaching unfavourable consequences not only for the region but beyond it as well.

"We are also concerned about the use of Afghan territory, especially areas controlled by the Taliban to conceal and train terrorists, and about the fact that dangerous consequences of such actions can be seen in Afghanistan, in the neighbouring countries and far beyond its borders. "Following the aforementioned, we have come to the following conclusions:

1. "We are convinced that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict and this must be settled through peaceful political negotiations with the aims of establishing a multi-ethnic and fully representative government on a wide bases.

2. "Accordingly, we urge the sides in Afghanistan to resume political negotiations aimed at achieving these goals.

3. "With the purpose of assisting the cessation of hostilities, which we consider essential, we have further agreed not to provide military support to any Afghan sides and to prevent the use of our territories for such purposes. We call upon the international community to take identical measures to prevent the delivery of weapons to Afghanistan.

4. "We express our readiness to promote direct negotiations between the Afghan sides under the auspices of the United Nations in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and Security Council of the United Nations and this Declaration in order to conclude an inter-Afghan agreement on the implementation of paragraph one mentioned above. As members of the Six-plus-Two group we are fully determined to provide our individual and collective support to this process.

5. "We think that the process of negotiations must be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and may consist of two stages.

(a) "The main purpose of the first stage is to adopt measures to reinforce mutual trust. These measures will include:

(i) "The signing of an agreement on an immediate and unconditional ceasefire without any pre-conditions;

(ii) "The holding of direct negotiations at this stage between the plenipotentiary delegations of the two main conflicting sides - the United Front [the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan] and the Taliban movement, including on:

- the exchange of POWs;
- lifting internal blockades and opening roads for reciprocal trade and the delivery of humanitarian aid on the territories controlled by various Afghan groups.

(b) "The main purpose of the second stage is to draw up basic principles of the future state structure of Afghanistan by the Afghans themselves and to form on a wide basis a multi-ethnic and fully representative government within a short period of time.

6. "Those of us who have common borders with Afghanistan, proceeding from a common desire to take effective and coordinated measures to combat illicit drug-trafficking, have agreed, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, to step up effective and coordinated measures to combat illicit drug-trafficking. In this connection, we recall and confirm the important role played by the United Nations Drug Control Programme in this process.

7. "We urge the Taliban movement to inform the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations about the results of their investigations into the killings of the diplomatic and consular staff of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e Sharif and of the correspondent of the Islamic Republic [of Iran] News Agency, and we call on the Taliban to cooperate fully with the international investigation into these killings with the purpose of punishing the guilty parties.

8. "We urge the Afghan sides, particularly the Taliban movement, to cease providing shelter to international terrorists and their organizations and training them and to cooperate with the efforts to bring terrorists to justice.

9. "We are fully determined to make every effort to encourage the Afghan parties to respect fully the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghan people in accordance with the basic norms of international law.

10. "We are prepared to cooperate with the new Afghan government which will be established in accordance with aforementioned paragraph one, in all aspects with the purpose of strengthening security and stability in Afghanistan and in the region, of returning Afghan refugees back to their native places and ensuring the soonest rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan through support from UN agencies and programmes, international financial organizations and donor countries.

11. "We call upon the international community to respond to the inter-institutional appeal on joint actions on rendering Afghanistan emergency humanitarian aid and rehabilitation assistance for the period between 1st January and 31st December 1999, voiced by the [UN] Secretary General, bearing in mind also the existence of the emergency targeted fund for Afghanistan. Support for demining is of particular importance.

12. "We call upon the international community to support these proposals and take coordinated steps to ensure the soonest settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan and we also call upon all forces in Afghanistan to show political will and wisdom, overcome their disagreements and mutual hostilities and not to miss a historic opportunity to achieve stable and long-lasting peace.

13. "The present Declaration is written in two originals, in English and Russian and both texts are equally authentic. Arranged in the city of Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, on 19th July 1999.

57 F.P. Report 990723

PESHAWAR—The chairperson of the Afghan Women Council, Fatana Ishaq Gialani, has said that the United Nations has badly disappointed the helpless and shelterless Afghans, who are leading an extremely deplorable life in various Afghan refugee camps in this civilised world.

"The international bodies including UN, human rights organisations, western countries besides all the Muslim countries have been making tall claims of human rights, democracy and other principles, but all of them have adopted silence towards the Afghan refugees, particularly the Afghan women and children," she told the Frontier Post in Peshawar on Thursday.

"There are no jobs for the Afghans. There are no medical facilities for them. There are no educational opportunities for the Afghan children and there are no sources of income for the Afghan women particularly the widows and helpless who have no male members in their families," she said, adding that the Afghan women were the worst sufferers and they had no right even to raise voice for their basic human rights. All the world bodies were making tall claims of democracy and women rights, but the entire world had forgotten them, she said.

"The Afghan women in Afghanistan are leading extremely miserable lives in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We the Afghan women have serious complaints against the Muslim rulers, particularly those of Pakistan and the Pakistani ulama, for ignoring them in this difficult time. The Pakistani politicians and the ulama have never contacted the Taliban as to why they have deprived the Afghan women of their basic human rights. We have been receiving a number of women delegations in our council's office

supporters are also hurling threats at those impartial people who are struggling for the restoration of peace and holding negotiations among the warring factions," Fatana added.

She said that being an Afghan woman she had been trying to solve the problems through negotiations and it was her commitment with the Afghan nation to work for the restoration of peace. I will stand by my words come what may. I will continue work for the restoration of peace and will not abandon my job. The threats to my life can not force me to leave the place. I am ready to face the consequences in this connection," she said, adding that her council had recently organised a seminar despite having financial and other problems. The Afghan women and intellectuals had expressed grave concern over the present state of affairs and dual policies of the UN. All the speakers in the seminar had criticised the world bodies for presenting mere reports on Afghanistan. They had asked the world to take practical steps for the solution of the Afghan crisis and save the Afghan generations from destruction.

The speakers had also complained that the Pakistani politicians and ulama had never formed a jirga to hold negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan regarding millions of Afghan refugees and other Afghans inside Afghanistan.

Fatana Gialani said that the Afghan women had been compelled to beg in the streets and bazaars.

She posed a question as to whether it was their Islamic right which the Taliban government had gifted to the helpless Afghans who had an excellent history. If this was un-Islamic, then why the ulama of Pakistan had adopted silence over the ongoing injustices with the Afghan women and nation, she quipped.

Stringent laws hamper Afghans' repatriation

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR—Though the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Pakistan and Iranian government are struggling hand in hand to encourage volunteer repatriation of the Afghan refugees, yet lack of livelihood sources and strict laws of Taliban government have hampered the repatriation process.

The UNHCR had already announced a package containing cash amount, wheat bags and plastic sheets, for the refugees.

During a visit to Torkham this correspondent witnessed that a large number of Afghan families are going back to their motherland. The UNHCR volunteers in Torkham told this correspondent that so far they had registered 17 families comprising 110 persons that had returned to Afghanistan, utilising the transportation facilities provided by the UNHCR. Likewise, the families have also received the UNHCR repatriation package, including Rs 5000 cash and 300 kg wheat per family.

It was further learnt that after reaching the UNHCR repatriation station at Jalalabad, these families with the collaboration of Taliban authorities are being despatched to their home villages and towns in the vehicles, arranged

free of cost for them by all of the concerned quarters.

Besides the UNHCR, a number of other NGO's are also contributing to repatriation of the refugees in their homes and towns.

But almost all these projects are concentrated in some particular provinces, where either Taliban didn't face any resistance or have been succeeded in establishment of their complete rule.

The UNHCR authorities had earlier said that by the end of June, number of returning refugees in current summer was above 51,000. A recent UN weekly update states that in the last one week some 400 families, comprising 2183 persons had returned from both NWFP and Balochistan to NWFP. Apart from such a great number of the repatriating refugees from both the provinces, 100 families had only returned to Khushai district of Logar province. Besides the UN reports, the personnel of secret agencies, stationed at Torkham have claimed that number of returning refugees was more than 5,000 in June.

There are conflicting views of various functionaries that the Afghans themselves are yet to get surty about complete peace and harmony in their motherland. An Afghan refugee who was entering Pakistan, said that although he had shifted his family mem-

bers to inside Afghanistan, it is impossible for them to survive there. Elaborating his point of view, he said that except Agriculture field or smuggling food items from Pakistan, there is nothing to do inside Afghanistan.

The Afghans are also facing difficulties to adjust themselves.

The personnel of secret agencies and Pakistani traders have informed that foreign assistance and aid had made greedy these people. After getting the UNHCR repatriation package, these families are again entering Pakistan. He added that they had made it a business or a source of livelihood. But the Afghan traders have disagreed with this perception and added that unless complete peace it could be impossible either for UNHCR or for Pakistan to get 100 per cent repatriation of the refugees.

Besides lack of employment opportunities and basic facilities of life, the renewed US threats of firing cruise missiles against the Arab militant Osama Bin Laden is also another hurdle in repatriation of the refugees. On the border, the transporters and drivers, arriving from various parts of Afghanistan particularly from Jalalabad, say that Afghans are expecting another round of air strikes by the United States in the near future, therefore majority of the civilians is to move to safer places.

Taliban beef up security at military training camps

News 970724

By Behroz Khan

PESHAWAR: Security arrangements at two important sites in Afghanistan have been beefed up by Taliban Islamic Movement as the student militia expects fresh American attacks in pursuance of Osama bin Laden.

Informed sources told The News that movement of people have been restricted at Rishkhar, south of Kabul, as well as the Tora Boora area of Nangarhar province. The former army garrison at Rishkhar is the new site for the "military training" of Islamists while the mountainous region of Tora Boora is believed to be the hideout of the Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden. The Tora Boora camp which housed a number of Arab families in the past, sources said is equipped with latest ground and air defence facilities.

Osama, who lived in Kandahar and Helmand provinces few months back has secretly moved in to Nangarhar following fears that the United States might resort to yet another attack to punish the exiled Saudi millionaire.

Taliban supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Omar has rejected US demand either to extradite or expel Osama saying that Afghans have always showed respect to their guests and protected their lives.

Commenting on the ongoing war of words between the Taliban and the United States on the Osama issue, an Afghan said that "it will be easier for

the Americans to hit the house of Mullah Omar in Kandahar but will find it difficult to get Osama due to his security arrangements." A top Taliban source said that Osama bin Laden keeps changing his hideouts every now and then and it was even difficult for the Afghans to know his whereabouts. "We only sense the signal of Osama's movement through the alteration in the security arrangements," said a reliable Taliban source.

Interviews with Pakistani nationalists returning from the Rishkhar training camp revealed that Taliban have provided the new site near Kabul for training. "First, that the site is near the capital which can easily be monitored and secondly the trained militants can serve as the reserve force to be used against the opposition forces fighting against the Taliban," said a source, who is trained both in Khost and Rishkhar. Taliban shifted the training camp from Khost to Rishkhar after the American air strikes on August 20 last year.

Rishkhar, experts believe is comparatively safe place surrounded by high mountains from three sides. The overall command of the camp has been given to Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, an offshoot of the Harkat-ul-Ansar organisation which was declared as "terrorist" outfit by the Americans. A source said that one of the camp at Rishkhar belong to the Arabs adding that majority of the Arab fighters spend most of the time at the frontlines but were in contact with the

camp. Another source familiar with the area said that the "trainees" and their "trainers" mostly Pakistani national, have been accommodated 1500 plus tents at the moment and the tentage village is visible from quite a distance. Anti-Taliban elements claim that the main source of the revenue generation by the ruling religious militia of Afghanistan is the donations made by Islamic groups and organisation from all over the world as well as the earnings from the poppy production. However, Taliban disown the charge.

When contacted for comments, Taliban officials denied the existence of any "terrorist" camps in Afghanistan saying that religious students have been provided the space at Rishkhar to get Shariah education. "Even the camps at Khost were not meant for providing military training," Taliban officials said. One such training camp, sources said has been set up in the former army brigade at Farn Hadda in Jalalabad which is run by Pakistani nationals to train fighters for the liberation of Kashmir.

"We are ready to fight for Muslims, be that in Kosovo, Bosnia, Algeria or Kashmir," said a TNSM activist from Swat, who has recently returned to his native village on completion of military training in defence warfare. The TNSM activist said that it was the religious duty of all the Muslims to get military training and offer their services to help their Muslim brethren.

UN predicts severe food shortage in Afghanistan

Nation 990724
By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD - The UN predicts a precarious food shortage of 1.13 million tons in 2000 due to poor production of crops due to erratic rains.

Mike Sackett of the World Food Programme (WFP) and Bary Stride of the Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO) told the weekly press briefing at the UN Information Center that the shortage is one of the severest in recent years.

A field study by the WFP-FAO showed that wheat production fell both in irrigated and rain-fed areas because Afghanistan experienced dry conditions this year, with snowfall being the lowest in 40 years.

Yields were good in the Eastern and southwestern regions due to sufficient water availability while in the Central Northern and Southern regions reduced availability of irrigation waters has diminished yields.

Low rainfalls in Eastern and Southern region and yellow rust and pest damage in northern region were said to be the main reasons for the fall in wheat production.

Mike Sackett said Afghan traders were expected to import 800,000 tons of wheat, while the WFP planned to supply 206,000 tons to meet the shortage.

The WFP has 97,000 in the pipeline for 1999 and would require 45 million dollars in donations to arrange the remaining 109,000 tons. Its emergency food aid targets about 1.2 million Afghans.

Some 85 percent of the country's estimated 21 million people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Only about 12 percent of the country's total land are arable, with 3 percent under forest cover, 46 percent permanent pastures, while the rest (39 percent) is mountainous. About half of the cultivable area is irrigated while the other half is arid or rain-fed.

For 1999 the harvested area for irrigated wheat is expected to be reduced by about 3 percent compared to 1998, largely due to an increase in cash crops (onion, potato, poppy and tree crops such as almonds and apricots) and dryland wheat plantings, which largely failed. This year's irrigated wheat har-

vest is expected to yield 1.99 million tonnes as compared to 2.02 million tonnes in 1998, a decrease of 1.5 percent.

Low rainfall has caused the failure of the rain-fed wheat crop in the Eastern and Southern regions. Reduced rainfall, yellow rust and other pest damage have reduced potential yields in the northern region. This year's wheat rain-fed harvest is expected to yield 512,000 tonnes, a reduction of 37 percent compared to last year's total of 814,000 tonnes. Overall, there is expected to be a reduction of 11.8% for all wheat crops and a 16% reduction for all cereal crops.

Wheat is the main food crop, accounting for more than three-quarters of food grain production. Since 1995 the agricultural section in Afghanistan has been steadily registering an appreciable recovery.

The FAO Crops Project provides improved seed to farmers and the FAO/WFP Food for Seed Programme assists in preserving some improved seed for planning in later years. The UN demining programme has served to increase the agricultural land available for planting.

Zahir Shah's ally, two others shot dead

News 990716

US, UN condemn Abdul Ahad Karzai's murder

QUETTA: An Afghan politician linked to Afghanistan's former king Zahir Shah was assassinated here, officials and police said Thursday.

Abdul Ahad Karzai, a former diplomat, was gunned down by two assailants late Wednesday as he came out of a mosque after prayers, an official statement said.

The gunmen, armed with automatic rifles, arrived on a motorcycle and drove off immediately after the shooting.

Two other worshippers, both Pakistanis, were also killed in the firing outside the mosque located at a marketplace in Quetta, the statement said.

Family sources said Karzai, who had been living in the United States, had arrived in Pakistan a few days ago. Police said they had no immediate idea as to the motive for the killings. Raids were conducted by the police in different parts of the city overnight in a bid to trace the killers, a police spokesman said.

Karzai was the fourth Afghan politician to be killed in Quetta since last year.

Those murdered before him included a former governor of

Afghanistan's western Herat province, Nazar Mohammad.

Meanwhile, the United States condemned the murder of Abdul Ahad Karzai.

"We deplore the tragic killing of Afghan tribal leader and former Senator Abdul Ahad Karzai," the State Department said in a statement late Wednesday, hours after Karzai was shot to death in Quetta.

Related reports on Page 5

"Mr Karzai was a leader of the Populzai tribe and a major voice for moderation among the Pushtoon tribes," the statement added.

The statement said Karzai "played a significant role in the fight against the Soviet occupation of his country," adding that he was also "active in trying to find peace" in his homeland.

"Our sympathies go out to his family and friends," the statement added. Karzai, a former diplomat, was linked to Afghanistan's former king Zahir Shah. The ex-monarch, who lives in Rome, recently aired a proposal to gather a cross-section of the Afghani public to consider ways of restoring peace and stability to Afghanistan.—AFP

Thousands of Pakistani militants and hundreds of Arab extremists have joined a huge build-up of mercenaries in Kabul, as transport planes from Pakistan land at Kabul airport, an alliance foreign ministry spokesman charged.

He maintained that Arab mercenaries included 400 militants from a dozen countries under the control of alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden who is wanted by the United States for the bombing of two US embassies in East Africa on August 7. The Arab mercenaries, known as the 055 Brigade, were independently armed and funded and had taken up positions along frontlines 25 kilometres north of Kabul, he added.

"Foreign military personnel and recruits captured by the armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan will not be considered, and therefore treated as prisoners of war but as criminals."

Afghan Opp to treat mercenaries as criminals

KABUL (AFP) - Afghanistan's Northern Alliance Monday warned the Taliban authorities that any alleged Pakistani or Arab mercenaries captured by the opposition would be treated as criminals and not prisoners of war.

"Thousands of Pakistani militants and hundreds of Arab extremists have joined a huge build-up of mercenaries in Kabul, as transport planes from Pakistan land at Kabul airport, an alliance foreign ministry spokesman charged."

Security tightened for US embassy, citizens

News 990724

"The US citizens were told that they should take care while driving and watch for the surveillance," the sources said adding, that the US nationals were also briefed on the measures taken for their protection.

They were also told to avoid unnecessary movement and not to travel to border areas. They were asked to arrange security guards at their residences.

"Pakistanis, working for the US government, were told to avoid arranging meetings for Americans with their alien friends," the sources said. During the UN-sponsored talks in Tashkent, the US Assistant of State of State Karl Inderfurth renewed US demand of Afghanistan ruling Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden.

Taliban supreme leader Mulla Muhammad Omar said this week the student militia would not surrender to the US demand for the extradition of Osama bin Laden. "Taliban would embrace martyrdom but would never succumb to the demands for expulsion of the Saudi dissident Bin Laden," Omar said in a recent statement.

Fearing US attack on Afghanistan, Arab families living near the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, have shifted to other safe places after press reports that Osama bin Laden is residing near the town. — NNI

ISLAMABAD: Local police have beefed up security for the American embassy and other US facilities in Islamabad amidst reports of imminent attacks on Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, diplomatic sources said Friday.

US ambassador to Pakistan William B Millam arranged two special briefings for the US citizens in Islamabad and the Pakistanis working for the US government, about the threats, the sources said.

"The briefings were held following State Department warning to make sure that there is no loophole for security of the Americans nationals," they told NNI. The American embassy and other US installations are among those buildings to be fortified for security reasons, the sources added.

Various Islamic groups have launched series of anti-US demonstrations across Pakistan amidst media reports that American commanders have arrived in Pakistan and Afghanistan to trace Osama bin Laden.

Roads leading to US embassy on Friday were blocked as Tehrik-e Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafria staged anti-American rally in Islamabad. The rally was organized to condemn the US-led attacks on Iraq's religious sites.

UN urged not to mix up humanitarian, political aid

News 990726

By Behroz Khan

PESHAWAR: Notwithstanding the stand taken by the UN, the western world and the hostile neighbours of Afghanistan on human and women's rights record of Taliban, the reality on ground remains contrary to this.

The stoppage of the much needed humanitarian assistance to poor Afghans undoubtedly warrant that human rights of the Afghans must not be violated in the guise of the prevention of human rights violations. Visits to different parts of that country suggest that the entire infrastructure of Afghanistan has been destroyed due to a war backed by the superpowers of the time and their regional and strategic allies. The huge amount spent on the war in Afghanistan resultantly reduced the country to ruins, killed more than 1.5 million people and according to the UN survey, maimed approximately three to four percent of the population including children and shook the social fabric of that country.

Victims of the foreign funded war, 28,000 widows in Kabul city alone and thousands of orphans are left with the only choice to feed themselves through alms and charity. Emma Bonino can observe March 8 as the World Women's Day to express solidarity with the Afghan women but her clash with the Taliban cannot help poor women, particularly the widows in Kabul to fight against the starvation. "The flowers sent by Bonino on the Women's Day cannot feed or help in any way the starving Afghans women," remarked Shukriya Kakar, an Afghan journalist who took refuge in Peshawar after the Taliban takeover.

The living conditions in Kabul are such that the international aid workers find it difficult to identify the deserving ones among the population. People are compelled to sell their households to make their both ends

meet. The economic condition which could not be improved by the rulers in Kabul to date have even forced families to send their children to be scavengers and beggars instead of going to schools. An Afghan NGO called "Ashyana" identified 28,000 such children in 11 districts in Kabul city alone.

As for as the issue of international humanitarian assistance is concerned, it must not be linked with the recognition of the Taliban government, especially by the United Nations. "We need to make some compromises as long as we can reach the poor. We should do it to help the poor and needy Afghans", said head of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Anders Fange. Referring to the UN and other international NGOs reluctance to restart humanitarian assistance, Fange said that these organisations should not mix up humanitarian assistance with the political priorities.

Swedish Committee runs home schools in rural areas in north-eastern and eastern Afghanistan imparting primary level education to 1,75,000 students. Majority of the schools, Fange said falls in areas controlled by Taliban which include some 30,000 girl students. "We have not experienced any difficulty due to the so-called Taliban ban on education," said Fange. But the UN is yet to approve or encourage the home schools concept.

The female acting chief of Akbar while talking to The News some time back remarked that "the world body and the international community need to encourage communication. It is not necessary that we look for ideal conditions to work in. We don't want to be involved in politics. All those countries fuelling the war by providing the evil means should stop this instead of stopping humanitarian assistance." She is one of the many foreign nationals who could not visit Afghanistan for the last one year as a result of the UN warning.

sult of the UN warning.

The Taliban restrictions on women varies from area to area and city to city. Kabul is under harsh set of rules in the guise of religion. And the reason behind this strictness seems to be due to the political changes brought by the educated minority since king Zahir Shah was dethroned in 1973 and the westernised life-style by Kabulites. But the same is not the case in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif while the situation in rural Afghanistan is totally different from the cities.

Not only Taliban, but the restrictions on women living in the cities were imposed during president Rabbani and prime minister Gulbaddin Hikmatyar's rule. Rabbani asked women and girl students to wear scarfs outside their homes while Hikmatyar closed down the cinemas in Kabul. Taliban went a step ahead by imposing ban on women jobs and converting all places of entertainment into mosques and religious schools.

India extends material support to Masood

F. P. Report

PESHAWAR - In the wake of military advancement of Taliban militia the Northern Alliance has enhanced its contacts with the Indian government.

The Frontier Post reliably learnt the opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood and some of his key aides were in constant contact with the Indian officials.

They have been receiving material support as well as technical know how regarding various issues including storage of arms and ammunition, construction of roads and air strips.

The sources informed that after the recent Kargil conflict the relations between both the sides had further improved. The Indians believed that the Taliban militia had been supporting the freedom-fighters in the occupied Kashmir due to which it had decided to further cement its ties with Ahmad Shah Masood.

During last couple of months the Taliban government has been charging the opposition Northern Alliance of receiving material and moral support from India and some other neighbouring countries.

The sources confided to The Frontier Post that few months back a high-level Indian delegation had met Ahmad Shah Masood and assured him of their all out support. The delegation included Muthu Kumar, Indian

Ambassador at Dushanbe, Brigadier V. K. Joshi and Dr. S. A. Qureshi, Councillor at Indian Embassy at Dushanbe.

Along with other major issues the delegation had reportedly discussed the setting up of a radio station which could be used by

Masood so as to counter the claims of Taliban forces. Furthermore, the delegation considered request made by Ahmad Shah regarding provision of gunship helicopters, uniforms along with other military equipment.

The sources in the Afghan opposition informed that a group of Indian technicians had visited Punjsher valley on the request of Ahmad Shah for repairment of tanks and other weapons. It was learnt that in the beginning of this year a delegation of Indian officials had reached Tajikistan

where it met Ahmad Zia, brother of Masood and Zabib Saleh, representative of Masood at Kulyab (Tajikistan). The delegation was reportedly sent there for providing technical assistance to the opposition forces in the field of storage of ammunition.

The Indian engineers were also seen in Khawak while they were constructing an air field there. There were also reports of repairing of Khawak-Khinjan road at Baghlan province. The team had left for India few months back.

Heavy infantry, artillery assault across 4 fronts: Routes to Panjsher cut off: Heavy casualties on both sides

Taliban unprecedented offensive; Nejrab falls

Nation 990729

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban militia Wednesday launched its much anticipated summer offensive aimed at defeating Afghanistan's Northern Alliance and ending the country's protracted civil war.

Taliban authorities, the alliance and independent sources confirmed the offensive began about 4am local time (2400 GMT) with infantry assaults across four front-lines which ring the heavily fortified Panjsher Valley.

The assaults were supported by tanks, heavy artillery barrages and aerial bombardments by the militia's fleet of Russian-made MiGs while analysts said the size of the Taliban military machine remains unprecedented.

A Taliban spokesman claimed militia troops — who already control 80 per cent of Afghanistan — had advanced six kilometres from Tagab, a strategic entry into the Panjsher Valley and had captured the district of Nejrab.

The Islamic militia captured Nejrab and are now attacking Mahmood-i-Raqi, a Taliban spokesman told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press.

He said 15 tanks and a sizeable quantity of ammunition were seized.

One Taliban commander told AFP the

militia had up to 100,000 men after a massive pre-offensive military build-up designed to knock out the alliance's defences 'once and for all'.

However, western diplomats in Pakistan said 50,000 Taliban troops was a more probable figure.

This was double the highest previous estimate of Taliban strength, put at 25,000 men in 1997 but the opposition has claimed Taliban numbers have been bolstered by Pakistan and Arab mercenaries. Opposition losses were conceded by the alliance as heavy fighting focused in Nejrab throughout Wednesday.

The Old and New Roads are about 25 kilometres north of Kabul, the nearby mountain range of Koh-i-Safi is to the east, and further east is the district Tagab.

The four points form the southern flank of the Panjsher Valley where opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood stands as the last obstacle to Taliban ambitions of taking total control of the country.

Military analysts attached to foreign embassies in Islamabad, said Masood had between 10,000 and 15,000 hardened troops and can rely on 40,000 men who were willing to defend their home-

land from the ethnic Pashtoon dominated Taliban.

'The Taliban outnumber Masood's forces by 10 to one,' Pakistan-based military analyst Kamal Hyder said.

The alliance — made up of ethnic Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmen — holds ground stretching from the Old road across the Shamali Plains to the Panjsher Valley, north to Tajikistan and east to Pakistan.

'They launched their attack last night in every direction,' alliance spokesman Abdullah said.

'On the New Road they attacked the main highway leading to Bagratmair-base. On the Old Road troops are bracing for a second attack to be launched mostly by Arabs and Pakistanis,' he claimed.

Abdullah said aerial bombardments were steadily hitting areas around the frontlines, including civilian areas. Both sides claimed the other had suffered heavy casualties.

Independent sources said foreign aid workers in the Panjsher were cut-off from southern routes while Kabul's eastwards exit through the Khyber Pass had also been blocked.

'The Taliban have blocked the road to Jalalabad at Sarobi. The road is cut, it could be impossible to fly out meaning the only way out for foreigners is the treacherous southern route through Kandahar,' one foreign aid worker said.

Kandahar is the Taliban's de-facto capital in the south from where the militia's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has vowed to rid his country of Masood.

In Kabul, residents said at least six rockets struck the capital, launched from hilltops controlled by Masood while artillery shelling on the nearby front was clearly audible to locals.

The offensive came just three days after the United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi left Afghanistan amid failed efforts to strike a peace deal between the warring parties.

Brahimi and the Six-plus-Two group appealed for peace but Brahimi had also asked Afghanistan's neighbour's to stop 'pouring arms and war making material into the country'.

Six-plus-Two groups Afghanistan's neighbours — Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, and Turkmenistan — with the United States and Russia in attempts to find a peace settlement.

UN suspends flights to Kabul

The United Nations said Wednesday its flights to Kabul will remain suspended pending reconfirmation of agreed security guarantees by Afghan parties.

The UN has sought a 'clarification' from the Afghan opposition Northern Alliance following the rocketing of Kabul airport on Tuesday, a UN statement here said.

The rockets, which impacted in or around the airport during the agreed window for take-off and landing of humanitarian flights, forced a UN plane and flights of ICRC and PACTEC to turn back, it said.

The statement said the UN agencies were 'extremely' concerned at the disruption of humanitarian activities by the rocketing.

It recalled that all parties to the Afghan conflict during a recent UN-sponsored meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, agreed to respect the impartiality of the UN.

'The UN has suspended its next flights to Kabul pending the reconfirmation of the agreed security guarantees,' the statement said.

UN plans permanent stay in Mazar-i-Sharif

Nation 990727

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The United Nations has decided to establish a full-time international presence in the northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif in September, UN said on Monday.

A mission of UN international staff visited Mazar earlier this month to support and assist in the expansion of ongoing programmes and continue preparations for the full resumption of others, the UN update said.

Meetings were held with the authorities and technical agencies and a dialogue maintained regarding UN principles. The authorities were re-briefed on agency plans, capacities and limitations.

The UN officials praised the local colleagues who have maintained operations in the absence of international staff over the last two years in Mazar-i-Sharif.

All stressed the need for a full and complete re-engagement of agencies

and of the need to now make up for lost time and to address the pressing humanitarian needs of the region.

Mission activities included reviewing and monitoring ongoing health, water, sanitation and irrigation, structure repair projects and making preparations for future activities, including establishing cross-border logistics and warehousing facilities, polio surveillance mechanisms, etc. And carrying out needs and situation assessments of crop yield reductions, food security and returnee re-integration issues.

A development of note was the arrival in Mazar of a group of over a hundred returnee families who had declined to return to their places of origin in Saripul Province. Pending longer-term resettlement these have been moved onwards to Mazar by the authorities and reportedly temporarily accommodated in the partially depopulated east of the city.

Big pro-Osama rallies in Jalalabad and Khost

News 990731

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

JALALABAD (Eastern Afghanistan): A big demonstration was staged here Friday to show solidarity with Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, and condemn US campaign to force the Taliban-led Afghan government to expel him from Afghanistan.

A similar demonstration was held in Khost, southern Afghanistan, where Bin Laden's suspected hideout was attacked by the US with cruise missiles on August 20 last year. The demonstrations in both Jalalabad and Khost were supposedly organised by tribal elders and notables and Taliban leaders were not included in the long list of speakers.

Talking to The News in Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, the provincial governor, Mulla Sadre Azam, said the demonstration reflected the aspirations of the people and their support for the Taliban decision not to hand over Bin Laden to his enemies. He did not agree with the observation that Jalalabad may have been chosen as the venue for the demonstration as the Saudi-born militant often spends time in his hideouts near the city. "Bin Laden is in hiding neither in Jalalabad nor in rest of Nangarhar province," he claimed.

Incidentally, the two pro-Bin Laden demonstrations in Afghanistan and another one by the JUI-F in Islamabad were held on a day when the private Peshawar-based Afghan Islamic Press reported that Bin Laden fearing a fresh US attack had decided to leave Afghanistan. The report was subsequently denied by a senior Taliban spokesman, Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawwakil.

In the Jalalabad demonstration, protesters shouted slogans against the US and President Clinton and voiced support for Bin Laden and the Taliban. They carried banners which carried slogans demanding death to America, Clinton and other "infidels" and warned that any attack against Bin Laden would be considered an offensive on all Afghans. "Osama bin Laden has been our guest for 20 years and the Afghans would never betray him," read one banner, while another one asked the UN to take President Clinton to task for ordering aggression against a host of countries.

The demonstrators marched from the Spin Jamaat mosque after Friday prayers and assembled at the Makhbarat Chowk for the public meeting. There was a token Taliban presence in the procession and some armed Taliban guards performed security duties on the occasion. However,

it was clear that the organisers enjoyed Taliban blessings and assistance.

A communique addressed to the UN secretary general, OIC, and other world bodies and approved by the meeting was later presented at the local UN office. On behalf of the tribes and people of Nangarhar, Laghman and Kunar provinces of eastern Afghanistan, the communique dismissed US allegations against Bin Laden regarding his involvement in acts of terrorism and termed them baseless. It said Bin Laden came to Afghanistan much before emergence of Taliban and was a guest of the Afghan nation for the past two decades. "It is Bin Laden's legal right to live in Afghanistan and the Afghans would sacrifice their lives to protect him. Unlike the last time, Clinton beware that another US attack on Afghanistan against Bin Laden would provoke the Afghans to take revenge," it warned.

Some of the speakers made hard-hitting speeches. Haji Faizullah Omar of Chaprihar district said the Afghans who defeated the British and the Russians could also fight the Americans. Mulla Abdul Quddus Jehadi of Kot district got the gathering to shout a resounding "yes" when he asked them whether they backed the Taliban policy not to abandon Bin Laden. Ustad Abdul Aziz of Surkhrod district said Bin Laden had earned the enmity of all infidels on account of his strong Islamic beliefs. Mulla Azizullah of Kunar province stressed it was the religious duty of all Muslims, especially Afghans, to protect Bin Laden. Malik Hikmatullah of Shinwari district was of the view that Bin Laden stood by the Afghans during their "jihad" against the Soviet occupation troops and it was now incumbent upon the Afghans to stand by him in his hour of need. Malik Nazeer of Khugiani district argued that the Taliban government wasn't empowered to decide Bin Laden's fate as he was an honoured guest of all Afghans and only the Afghan nation could take decision in his case. Another tribal elder, Abdul Qadir Chamkani, maintained that the US was against every true Muslim rather than Bin Laden only. Dost Mohammad Khan of Mohmand Darra district felt no sacrifice would be big enough in an effort to protect Bin Laden and even Afghan girls would come out to do so in case of need. Haji Ghulam Nabi of Behsud district declared Afghans would die rather than surrender Bin Laden. Ajab Gul Mukhlis of Hisarak district said there would be no compromise on Bin Laden.

Osama leaves Jalalabad for hideout

DUBAI (AFP) - Alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden has abandoned his Jalalabad hideout in eastern Afghanistan for fear of an "imminent" US attack, an Arab newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The London-based daily Al-Hayat said Osama first met officials of the Taliban militia to review "information that a US attack was imminent."

Taliban officers supervised his move to a secret location elsewhere in Afghanistan, the paper said, quoting "informed sources."

Osama was accompanied by family members and supporters, including his military chief Mohammad Atef, and the head of Egypt's outlawed Jihad group, Ayman Zawahiri, who has been condemned to death in Egypt, it said.

The Saudi dissident, who has been stripped of his nationality, was based in Jalalabad since February.

Interior Minister Ch. Shujaat Hussain said last week that his country would not allow its territory to be used for any action against Osama.

The United States last year attacked suspected Osama terrorist camps in Afghanistan with cruise missiles.

Turkmenistan offers electricity at half of IPPs tariff

News 990725

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: In a pleasant surprise, energy rich Turkmenistan has offered to deliver electricity to Pakistan at half the tariff currently under dispute with independent power producers (IPPs).

The News learnt on authority that Turkmenistan has offered to sell electricity to Pakistan at US cents 3.4 per unit. It has conveyed that it can transmit about 5000 million kilowatt per year. With indigenous cheap gas resources, Turkmenistan can afford even lower a tariff than 3.4 cents per unit, sources said.

If materialised, the project has the potential to become Asia's largest power network with a transmission line spread over whole of the region.

The offer surprised many in Islamabad as it came at a time when the government has long been fighting with private companies to reduce tariff from US cents 6.1 per units. And despite high profile bitter controversy, the government could not

achieve its target of securing 25 to 30 percent tariff reduction.

A draft agreement to this effect is under Pakistan government's study at present which Turkmenistan wants to formally sign as soon as possible. It invited federal minister for water and power Gohar Ayub Khan to visit Ashkhabad at his convenience next month or Turkmen energy minister can visit Pakistan at a short notice to sign the agreement.

Surplus in electricity and natural gas production, Ashkhabad is desperately looking for a market mainly in Pakistan, obviously in war-ravaged Afghanistan in its way and in energy hungry India ultimately. Total electricity production in Turkmenistan is over 15 billion kilowatt, sources said.

Official sources, however, see Ashkhabad's move bit cautiously saying the offer lacked sound footing and too premature for signing of an agreement. Though the rate is too cheap, it needs further talks in the light of ground realities and technical details.

They said currently Pakistan was

already surplus in power but will require more electricity by 2002-3.

These sources said that Turkmenistan, Pakistan and STFA of Turkey had signed a memorandum of understanding a couple of months back to prepare a feasibility study for electricity import, transmission line route in Afghanistan, electricity market in Pakistan, availability in Turkmenistan and commercial and tariff issues. The feasibility study is yet to be completed and Ashkhabad has shown bit hurry to sign the agreement.

Pakistan and Turkmenistan are already in agreement for the import of natural gas to Pakistan through a 1500 km pipeline but the project faced a set back when UNOCAL, the consortium leader quit the consortium to construct the pipeline due to what it said unending war in Afghanistan. The two countries have renewed the agreement a couple of months back but could not succeed to find a prospective investor to reconstitute a fresh consortium for the gigantic multi-billion dollar project.

Afghan women have full business opportunities

News 990730

By Sadaqat Jan

ISLAMABAD - The Afghan women have proved that how entrepreneurial spirit can be harnessed if they are given a helping hand to begin with. In spite of being considered a rigid society, it allows its women to set up small business in order to share the economic burden with their men, according to Aina, the UN quarterly magazine on Afghanistan.

Those women who want to work are being helped out by Group Guaranteed Lending and Savings (GGLS) programme which is being run by Dutch and Swedish governments, UNISEF with the funding from UNHCR in Northern Afghanistan.

The programme, first of its kind in Afghanistan since 1995 has disbursed no less than 17,000 loans worth over a million of dollars, says the UN magazine.

The idea of GGLS was taken from Bangladesh where it proved to be highly successful as far as increasing income of a family was concerned by extending loans to women. "A small loan of between 30 to 200 dollars allows a woman to buy raw materials for embroidery or carpet weaving, start a small shop or bakery or raise livestock.

The UN Magazine quoted a number of examples in which both skilled and unskilled women were provided loan

and they had been able not only to repay loan but also generate income. "The project proved remarkably resilient and the high repayment rates have shown the credit-worthiness of women", the Magazine said.

The programme operates in two regions of northern Afghanistan: around Andkhoy in Faryab province and Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province.

The project is administered by local couples called promoters, who travel to the project areas, receive repayments, discuss problems and ensure that groups are meeting regularly, Aina says.

The magazine says ultimate aim of the project is to create a local management organisation or village bank to take over from the foreign donors and putting it firmly in local hands for a sustainable future.

Afghanistan's political turbulence and the possibility of more disruption in future have meant both delays and a reappraisal of how such a successor organisation should be set up, Aina notes. To overcome soaring inflation and Afghan's rapid devaluation against the US dollar all transactions are made in dollars.

Security and fighting in the region did affect the project's operation in 1997 and 1998. "Despite the turmoil in many areas, the economy has recovered and the project returned to normal," says the Magazine.

Taliban admit presence of foreign volunteers

These people, Mutmaen said, would definitely render sacrifices along with the Taliban to fulfil the aspirations of those whose wishes were trampled by the organisations and Rabbani government. This, he said, reflects their good intention to see the enforcement of a true Islamic system in Afghanistan because their hearts and dears have done the same for the same purpose.

Mutmaen avoided to comment on the reports that Saudi millionaire, Osama bin Laden is preparing to leave Afghanistan. He said that he did not know the new strategy and hence was unable to offer comments. The spokesman said that Taliban had already addressed to all queries on the issue of Osama bin Laden.

Taliban admit presence of foreign volunteers

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban have admitted the presence of a large number of foreign volunteers fighting alongside them against the Afghan opposition.

In an interview with the BBC, Taliban spokesman in Kandahar, Maulvi Abdul Hai Mutmaen termed these volunteers as non-governmental Mujahideen. He said that the Mujahideen of the entire world have fought for the supremacy of the Islamic system. He added that these Mujahideen were justified to do so as their brothers and relatives have rendered sacrifices for the enforcement of a true Islamic system in Afghanistan.

News 990802

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Sunday captured Charikar, the capital of Parwan province and entered Jablous Siraj, 60 kilometres north of Kabul, the stronghold of opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masud, Afghan sources told NNI.

The sources said the fighters of the student militia entered Jablous Siraj at 3 pm (Afghan time) and were now romping to take control of the whole of Panjsher Valley.

The fall of Jablous Siraj was not immediately confirmed by the opposition or independent sources.

The Taliban in Saturday's offensive had captured the strategic Bagram air base, before they overcame stiff resistance offered by the opposition Northern Alliance forces.

The sources said that the Taliban forces have also captured a huge arms cache which the opposition forces used in their attacks on the

Taliban gain control of Charikar and Jablous Siraj

Continued from Page 1

Disillusioned with the situation, the United Nations Secretary General's special envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi wound up his peace mission after he failed to convince the Taliban to exercise restraint.

"Ambassador Brahimi has left for the United States to present report to the Secretary General about the UN-sponsored Tashkent meeting and his talks with the Taliban and the Pakistani leaders," a UN official said on Sunday.

Earlier Taliban consolidated positions at the strategic Bagram air base. The forces of Afghan Islamic Emirate captured the Bagram airport and the surrounding heights last night and now they are consolidating positions, diplomatic sources told NNI.

The Bagram air base, 50-kilometre northeast of Kabul is located in Parwan province. The Taliban took control of the air base after they launched major offensive on opposition on Wednesday.

Taliban fighters have also captured intersection outside Bagram air base. They launched attack from Shakardara and Guldara and entered Qarabagh district before overrunning Bagram.

Reports say that about 200 people, including 17 Taliban fighters, have been killed while a large number of others injured. Taliban are now

planning to move towards Panjsher Valley, the bastion of Commander Ahmed Shah Masud.

Observers believe that Ahmed Shah Masud will show stiff resistance to Taliban in Panjsher Valley. He bravely defended his base during the then Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and even after the collapse of the communist regime.

Reports suggest that Masud has deployed long-range missiles at the mountains to defend Panjsher. The areas have also been heavily mined to stop Taliban advancement.

—NNI

AFP adds: Afghanistan's frontlines erupted into full-scale battle zones on Sunday with the ruling Taliban militia scoring quick victories and forcing opposition troops led by commander Ahmad Shah Masud to retreat.

Opposition and independent sources said the Taliban had made substantial gains in pushing back Kabul's northern frontlines with the heaviest fighting centred on Bagram air base, 50 kilometres north of the capital.

"We are no longer on the Old Road. Our forces have retreated," opposition spokesman Abdullah conceded.

Kabul's two frontlines had been positioned on the Old and New roads about 25 kilometres north of the city. They had remained unchanged for three years until the Taliban launched the summer offensive on Wednesday.

Abdullah said Masud's troops had withdrawn from the Old Road to defend Charikar, a provincial city neighbouring Bagram air base. Effectively Kabul's frontlines have been redrawn.

The Taliban earlier stunned the opposition by capturing Bagram air base with a fresh assault along the New Road that ended a 24-hour lull in fighting which enabled both sides to clear out the dead and wounded.

But later the opposition claimed to have retaken Bagram.

The Taliban have not commented since launching the offensive against Masud Wednesday.

Independent sources with close links to the Taliban said the militia had launched separate strikes from bases in the Ghorband Valley to the west of Charikar and Jablous Siraj.

Other sources confirmed that the Taliban infantry from Ghorband had cut the Northern Highway, an extension of the Old Road, between Charikar and Jablous Siraj.

"This means the Taliban are now advancing on Masud's troops and the new frontline at Charikar and Bagram from the north and from the south," one independent source said.

The artillery fire and aerial bombardments were much heavier and louder than in recent memory, with jets screaming low overhead and shells exploding perilously close to homes on Kabul's outskirts.

"In 1996 it was worse with civil war being fought in Kabul. But still last night was different, very loud, very hot fighting, particularly around dawn," said a resident, Mohammad Yar.

Independent sources said the Taliban's ability to secure Kabul had vastly improved by forcing the opposition into retreat and knocking out rocket-launching positions held by Masud along the way.

No rockets landed on Kabul Sunday and the militia's aging fleet of MiGs flew out of Kabul airport unimpeded.

At least 75 rockets have exploded in or around the airport in the last three months alone. Thirty-one were fired from Masud's positions last week.

Masud can still strike Kabul from the Panjsher with longer range rockets but for the moment his routine means of hitting the Taliban army over, one western observer said. "The Taliban have had a good day."

Updated casualty figures were unavailable for the fifth day of the offensive. But independent sources have said the number of dead and wounded from the first four days, on both sides, could exceed 1,000.

"The militia's biggest problem are landmines. Masud has laid them out in a very clever way. There are paths through the fields but at the end you'll find machine gunners," the western observer said.

Taliban make strategic gains

Pakistan has no troops in Afghanistan: FO

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban forces made major strategic gains Monday with the capture of the key northern city of Charikar and Bagram airbase after heavy fighting with troops loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, independent sources said.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) later reported the fall of the town of Jabul Saraj, 80 kilometers north of Kabul, to the Taliban in their push toward Masood's Panjsher valley bastion.

Another AIP report said Taliban troops had also captured Mahmud-i-Raqi, capital of the northeastern province of Kapisa.

The Pakistan-based private news service quoted Taliban sources as saying Masood's forces had retreated into the Panjsher after dynamiting the entrance to the valley.

There was no immediate comment from the opposition on the day's events.

Independent sources in Kabul said hundreds of civilians fled surrounding districts as the Taliban troops advanced into Charikar.

Taliban troops are in Charikar and they have also advanced northwards and

are on the edge of Jabul Saraj, one source in Kabul said earlier.

Jabul Saraj is strategically important as it guards access to the Salang Tunnel on the main Salang highway that links Kabul with northern Afghanistan.

It is also located close to Gulbahar district which sits at the mouth of Masood's Panjsher Valley bastion.

Independent sources said combined dead and wounded figures for both sides from five days of renewed fighting were well in excess of 1,000. "The number is probably closer to 1,500 by now," one foreign aid worker said.

AIP said at least 28 Masood soldiers died and many were wounded in the fighting for Charikar. The AIP put the Taliban losses at five dead.

It said the Islamic militia also captured 130 opposition fighters and seized a large quantity of arms and ammunition in the city.

A local journalist said "Bagram air base and Charikar town are under firm and complete control of the Taliban."

The Islamic militia seized back the airbase, north of Kabul, after capturing

and then losing it again within hours on Sunday.

"Masood forces have retreated into the Panjsher valley. There was not much fighting and the Taliban entered Charikar without any resistance early in the morning after Masood pulled out."

He said Charikar was like a "ghost town" with all the shops closed and no civilians on the streets. Normally around 30,000 to 40,000 people live there.

"The advance has forced hundreds of civilians to flee. Many are heading for Kabul and some, particularly Masood supporters, will head north or retreat into the Panjsher valley," one foreign aid worker said.

The journalist added the Taliban have gone beyond Charikar to Pul-i-Matak, 70 kilometres north of Kabul. Bagram was also totally under Taliban control, he said.

The capture of the Masood stronghold and the airport was a major gain for the Taliban which launched a summer offensive last week. The Islamic militia control more than 80 percent of Afghanistan.

Masood is the only obstacle to complete control.

The offensive came almost immediately after peace efforts by the United Nations failed to find a political resolution to the Afghan civil war.

On Sunday the militia made significant gains by pushing the Kabul frontlines back 25 kilometres to the southern edge of Charikar and Bagram airbase, about 50 kilometres north of the capital.

AIP said the Taliban overran several northern towns on Sunday including Guldara, Shakardara, Istalif, Qarabagh and Farza. No comments were immediately available from the Taliban or the opposition spokesmen.

The Taliban have been waging a five year civil war against forces loyal to ethnic Tajik commander Masood who holds the northeast provinces.

Nafees Takkar adds: Habibullah, First Secretary of Afghan embassy in Islam-

abad, told *The Nation* on Monday that Taliban forces have captured Mehmude Raqi—capital of Kapisa province, Charikar—capital of Parwan province, Gulbahar and Jabul Saraj, at the doorsteps of Panjsher Valley. Taliban have already strengthened their positions at Charikar and Bagram airbase.

The frontlines are now positioned about 70 kilometres far from the Afghan capital, Habibullah said. "Our forces can now easily hit Panjsher Valley with rockets from Mehmude Raqi," he said.

Habibullah, First Secretary of the Afghan Embassy got the latest fighting position from Taliban high authorities in Kabul. "Yes, I have a constant contact with Kabul," he said.

He said Taliban's quick advance towards Panjsher valley has been stopped for the time being due to destruction of a bridge situated on the mouth of a mountain pass leading to the valley. The bridge called Pol-i-Mutack was destroyed by Taliban forces, Habibullah said, to obstruct Taliban's movement towards Panjsher.

"The fall of Panjsher is now imminent," he said. He was hopeful of more gains for Taliban and more losses for the opposition forces in the coming few days. Ghairat Baheer, a former commander of Hizb-i-Islami of Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar, now based in Islamabad, also said that after the capture of Mehmude Raqi, Panjsher could possibly fall to Taliban. He, however, said military positions in Afghanistan always remained unpredictable. "If Taliban can advance they can also retreat," he said.

"For our side, we, however, think that fighting will not resolve the Afghan issue," Baheer said. Taliban should, rather, involve all the Afghans in consultations to restore the rule of law in the war-torn Afghanistan, he said.

A spokesman for the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan led by Pir Gilani also predicted fall of Panjsher Valley to Taliban. He was not sure that when Taliban will capture the valley, locked in the small hills adjacent to the Hindukush peak series. National Islamic

Front is a pro-King Zahir group.

Former governor of eastern provinces including Nangrahar and Kunar, Haji Qadeer, however, told BBC Pashto Service that their troops were still occupying positions on the hill tops of Salang in the north-east, about 90 kilometers, of Kabul. He said their forces were in a striking distance. Haji Qadeer forms part of the Anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.

APP from Islamabad adds: Foreign Office Spokesman on Monday rejected allegations leveled by former President of Afghanistan Burhanuddin Rabbani that Pakistan's forces were meddling in the war-shattered country.

When contacted Foreign Office Spokesman Tariq Altaf told this agency, the accusation is totally baseless.

"We have no troops in Afghanistan," said the Spokesman. Pakistan has always supported UN peace efforts in the war-ravaged country as restoration of peace there was in its interest.

Rabbani on Sunday has accused Pakistan of interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, saying, its forces were fighting along the Taliban.

Meanwhile, the Afghan embassy in Islamabad has dismissed the allegations of the former Afghan President, Sibghatullah Mujaddedi that Pakistanis and Arabs are fighting along side the Taliban in their latest offensive against the Northern Alliance.

Mujaddedi has levelled such allegations in his letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif asking him to withdraw Pakistanis and Arab guerillas from Afghanistan as he did in Kargil and averted a major disaster. Likewise, he reiterated his charges in an interview with the BBC as well.

Reacting strongly to the remarks of head of National Salvation Front of Afghanistan Mujaddedi, the statement of the embassy said there is no presence of the foreign nationals in the ranks of the Taliban. It said the Afghan nation gives no importance to such baseless and uncalled for statement of the persons who have no say in the affairs of the country.

Nation 990803 Taliban sign wheat import accord with Kazakhstan

KABUL (NNI) - Taliban have signed an agreement with Kazakhstan for the purchase of 60,000 tonnes of wheat and 8,000 tonnes of wheat has already been imported to Herat.

Taliban Deputy Commerce Minister Maulvi Fazal Mohammad Faizan told reporters in Kabul that the import of wheat from Kazakhstan has started. A delegation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan headed by Maulvi Faizan visited Kazakhstan last month and struck wheat import deal worth \$8 million.

The Minister said that \$1.2 million have already been paid to the Kazakh government. He said that 8,000 tonnes of wheat has already reached Herat while the remaining would reach within five months.

Masud seeks world help for 250,000 displaced Afghans

News
990804

KABUL: Opposition leader Ahmad Shah Masud on Tuesday urged the world to help a quarter of a million Afghans who had taken refuge in Panjsher valley.

"Around 250,000 civilians have come to Panjsher because of the fighting. They have no shelter and food. We appeal for urgent international aid for these people," Dr Abdullah, Masud's chief spokesman, told Reuters in Islamabad.

Abdullah said most of those displaced by the first major Taliban offensive in 10 months were ethnic Tajiks fearing reprisals at the hand of the Islamic militia, which draws support from the majority Pashtun ethnic group.

There was no independent confirmation of Abdullah's figures but reporters who visited Charikar and nearby villages which fell to the Taliban on Monday said they were depressed.

"The future of these displaced is unknown. They are exposed to any type of disease and hunger," Abdullah said, accusing the Taliban of perpetrating unspecified "brutal acts" in their advance. His statement followed a warning by the London-based human rights group Amnesty International last week that thousands of civilians were at risk in the Taliban drive to crush Masud, their last major foe after three years of factional fighting.

Abdullah's appeal was issued as the Taliban pushed further into opposition territory and captured Gulbahr, Masud's second most important bastion after the Panjsher valley. Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), an independent news agency, quoted Taliban Information Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi as saying the town was captured on Monday evening.

Muttaqi said Gulbahr was the headquarters of Abdurrah Rasool Sayyaf, an top ally of Masud.

AIP said the Taliban had launched a clean-up operation in the area and they (Taliban) had extended their control more than 80

km (50 miles) north of Kabul to the edge of the Panjsher Valley.

It said that Taliban forces had occupied the town of Shir Khan Bandar on the border of Tajikistan, overcoming strong resistance from opposition forces.

AIP said after Taliban occupation of Shir Khan, fighting might intensify on the Kunduz, Takhar and Baghlan fronts, areas of northeastern Afghanistan where Masud has control.

The fall of Charikar, 60 km (35 miles) north of Kabul, gave the Taliban control of the Shomali region and pushed back front lines from Kabul which had allowed Masud to fire rockets on the capital for the past three years.

The Taliban mounted the offensive days after the end of inconclusive UN-backed peace talks. The Taliban say Masud should surrender and join their administration but Masud wants an interim government grouping all factions and ethnic groups. — Reuters

Nation 990805 Afghan drug production to increase, says UN

BISHKEK (Internews) — The production of heroin in Afghanistan is likely to increase to 700 tons in the year 2000, says a report by experts of the "Qsh Knot" United Nations project for curbing drugs.

The report, released in Bishkek Wednesday, deals with the Central Asian states, according to Interfax.

The project was launched in 1997 and is being implemented in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to combat the transit of drugs produced in Afghanistan.

The report claims that 3,500 tons of Afghan drugs are annually delivered to Russia and Europe through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

UN experts also claimed in the report that Central Asian criminal drug groups were being integrated into the international drug trade system.

"Spheres of influence have been divided up. There exist groups specializing in smuggling drugs from Afghanistan to Tajikistan, and in delivering drugs to Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States from Tajikistan through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," the report said.

According to the report, 80 percent of the heroin seized in Russia arrived from Central Asian republics.

China to build cement factory in Afghanistan

KABUL (Internews) — Afghanistan and China have signed an agreement to set up a cement plant in the province of Kandahar, news reports said here Monday.

"The agreement has been signed to construct a cement factory in Kandahar with an output of a thousand tons daily," Taliban newspaper Anis reported, quoting unnamed official sources.

The documents for the first phase of a commercial proposal to construct the plant were signed between the Ministry of Mines and Industries and the CBMC Company of China.

"The pact was signed between Maulvi Abdul Salam, deputy minister of mines and industries, and the head of the CBMC Company," according to the report.

The deputy minister told Anis: "Some 95 percent of the work on the contract has been completed. We are hoping that the final phase of the full contract will be concluded in the near future."

The factory would be built with the latest technology over an area of a square kilometer and its output will be 1,000 tons of cement every 24 hours. "The factory will provide jobs to hundreds of people," Salam

added. "The signing of contracts with foreign countries and companies demonstrates that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has put economic and industrial projects on top of its agenda," according to the deputy minister.

It was envisaged that the step would remedy the economic difficulties, enhance the people's standard of living and pave the way for people to find employment. The Islamic emirate was planning to take effective and valuable measures in this direction, he said.

"The signing of contracts with

foreigners also demonstrates that security has returned to the country, creating confidence amongst foreign companies and investors to participate in the reconstruction and establishment of economic projects in Afghanistan," he added.

Last week the Taliban-controlled Radio Sharia announced that Afghanistan, China were "exploring new era in trade relations" and were "all set to initiate mutually beneficial trade relations."

The People's Republic of China was ready to assist the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in various trade and commerce fields, the radio quoted the Afghan deputy minister of mines and industries as saying.

He had returned to Kabul after "a fruitful visit to China to explore bilateral business and investment opportunities" at the head of a seven-member delegation.

He said his team had held several fruitful meetings with government officials and private businessmen of China and that the results were "wholly positive."

The deputy minister listed the areas in which China had reportedly agreed to help Afghanistan as development of light industry, gas and pipelines and likewise in other development projects.

The radio added that the Afghan delegation explained to their Chinese hosts "the peaceful aims of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan pertaining to strengthening ties and good neighbourly relations between the two countries."

The deputy minister promised that Afghanistan would "prepare commensurate opportunities for all countries which invest in Afghanistan and not spare any efforts to cooperate with them closely."

Taliban claim new victories in Kunduz

Nation 990805

Omar offers amnesty to opposition forces

KABUL (AFP) - The Taliban's supreme leader urged the opposition to surrender Wednesday as fresh fighting erupted in north Afghanistan with a major offensive to capture the whole country entering the second week.

Fighting was reported around the newly established frontlines about 100 kilometres north of Kabul while the militia claimed new victories in the northern province of Kunduz.

In an open letter to opposition forces the militia's chief Mulla Mohammad Omar offered an amnesty to the opposition.

'All those people who are still with the opposition are requested not to stand against their religion or country and lay down their arms.'

'If they give up the resistance I declare an amnesty for them according to which their lives and property will be safe,' Omar said.

Tens of thousands of people are said to be fleeing the fighting, flooding into the capital Kabul and other areas in search of a safe haven.

Opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood, who has fought a five year civil

war against the militia, blew up the entrance to the Panjsher Valley on Monday to block the Taliban from his main base.

But, the militia, which controls 80 per cent of Afghanistan claimed it had taken the district of Imam Sahib in the far north.

Taliban information minister Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi said troops were securing areas around Imam Sahib and the border areas between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

'We have also captured Sher Khan Bander,' Muttaqi said. Sher Khan Bander is a port town on the Amu River, which borders Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Analysts expect the Taliban to launch the second wave of its summer campaign eastwards from Imam Sahib and target the provincial city of Taloqan which straddles key supply routes heading south to the Panjsher Valley. Its aim is to wipe out the last pockets of resistance to its rule.

Opposition general, Sayed Anwari disputed the Taliban's claim saying the

militia had been repulsed from Imam Sahib while opposition troops were holding the high ground around Jabul Seraj. 'While Jabul Seraj remains a virtual no man's land, the Taliban militia is unable to advance further northwards.'

Their troops were repulsed from the district of Imam Sahib and surroundings districts. Previous frontlines remain intact,' Anwari said.

Taliban accused of forcing people to leave homes

Meanwhile, the opposition and Kabul residents accused the militia of forcing people to leave their homes and moving them by bus to eastern Jalalabad. 'This is very serious. The Taliban are forcing people out of their houses while claiming to protect the people, 300,000 people have left fearing Taliban savagery,' opposition spokesman Abdullah said.

Rejecting the opposition claim, Taliban's Minister of Information Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi said 1,800 families were taken to the eastern province of Nangarhar to safeguard them against fighting.

He said the transfer was in keeping with international laws covering civilians in war zones and was done because the opposition had used civilians and their homes as 'human shields'.

The families have settled in Sar Shahi, a desert camp out of the provincial capital Jalalabad which used to house tens of thousands of people displaced from Kabul in the 1994 Mujahideen

factional fighting, he said.

'Some 1,800 families have so far reached Jalalabad and the same number have been brought to Kabul where special places will be allocated for them,' the minister said.

Independent sources say a further 100,000 people had scattered across the opposition-held Panjsher Valley.

However, independent sources said Taliban motives were based on securing the civilian population in safe areas and away from front lines to the north

of Kabul where the militia has over-run opposition positions.

Muttaqi said the move was temporary while Jalalabad local authorities had provided food, water and security measures for them. He reassured refugees in the Panjsher Valley they could return to Kabul safely.

It is a 'legal' practice in the 'particular military situation' and does not target any group in particular, he said when asked why the families were being relocated.

Taliban close in on Masood's last bastion

FP 990804

overrun another district

KABUL (Agencies) - At least 100,000 civilians have fled the advancing Taliban causing a widespread refugee crisis, as the militia Tuesday pressed north towards the Salang Tunnel.

The Taliban militia, meanwhile, yesterday captured a district in Kunduz province, following a sweeping push against the opposition near Kabul, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The district of Imam Saheb fell after brief fighting that left eight soldiers dead from both sides, the private news service said, quoting Taliban sources.

There was no independent confirmation of the claim.

The Taliban already holds part of Kunduz, which is adjacent to Takhar province, a vital supply base for the last remaining Taliban opponent Ahmad Shah Masood in his Panjsher valley bastion.

Masood's spokesman Abdullah earlier said the Taliban militia was expected to attack Takhar's capital of Taloqan in an attempt to cut the opposition's supply routes to the Panjsher.

Reverting back to the refugees' exodus, the opposition claimed

250,000 people had fled to the Panjsher Valley where anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood remains the last obstacle to total Taliban domination of Afghanistan.

'There are a bare minimum 100,000 refugees in the valley who have fled the fighting and this is a very big humanitarian crisis. The civilian population is maybe 300,000 so it could be much higher,' one western source said.

The exodus follows six days of the Taliban's summer offensive which has forced Masood to retreat from frontlines north of here.

The Taliban already holds part of Kunduz, which is adjacent to Takhar province, a vital supply base for Masood.

Masood withdrew from the plains to the south of the Hindu Kush mountain range into the Panjsher Valley. He then blew up the mountain pass, and halted the Taliban advance into the valley.

In Kabul, there were further reports of civilians fleeing the fighting in tens of thousands after the militia told locals in areas previously held by Masood to leave until the militia could secure the area.

UNSC slates foreign interference in Afghanistan

News 990806

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council Thursday condemned the Islamic Taliban militia's latest offensive in Afghanistan against the last bastion of opposition in the north of the country.

'Members of the SC condemned the Taliban for the launching of the large-scaled military offensive in the recent days,' said a statement read by council president Martin Andjaba of Namibia.

In their closed-door meeting here, council members 'demanded that the Taliban stop the offensive immediately and resume political negotiations under the UN auspices,' Andjaba said.

The council also said it was worried about reports of foreign military involvement — specifically from Pakistan — in the conflict.

'Members of the SC expressed

their concern at reports of massive military assistance in support of above-mentioned offensive,' Andjaba said. 'They call for the immediate end of all external interference.'

Earlier, Afghanistan's ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani accused Pakistan of intervening in his country.

'It can be attested on clear evidence that these wars were staged by the short-sighted and injudicious leaders of Pakistan,' Rabbani said in a letter to the council.

But the council did not, as Rabbani had urged, name Pakistan in its statement.

'Members of the so-called "Islamic" extremist groups are continuously recruited, trained, armed and dispatched along with Pakistani military personnel into Afghanistan,' Rabbani said.

'To our dismay, the international community, throughout this period, with regards to the cessation of foreign aggression in Afghanistan, did not resort to any beneficial or constructive measures.' —AFP

Afghan heroin may make way into Pakistan

FP 990806

By RIAZ KHAN

PESHAWAR - A record quantity of heroin and opium is feared to be smuggled from Afghanistan into Pakistan following the Taliban's summer offensive against the forces of one-time best-loved hero of the Afghan war, Ahmed Shah Masood against the now fallen-apart USSR.

The Taliban have reportedly levied tithe (usher) on poppy in the bordering districts under their control as a legal instrument, making the local producers top a record 3,000 tonnes of poppy production this year.

Sources told this scribe that in some bordering districts and areas of Kama, etc the farmers even defy the Taliban levy of tithe and stored their produce in far-away areas.

Another source in the Bajaur Agency said that both the Pakistani and Afghanistan carriers charge Rs. 1,000 per kilo of opium for its carriage.

Pakistan, after the introduction of the treaty-mandated controls, having an effect on the manufacture and consumption of the controlled sub-

stances and its own redoubled efforts for both supply and demand reduction, successfully reduced poppy production of 800 tonnes in early '80s to ten tonnes this year, but despite its collaboration in drug-control efforts with the international agencies, is again threatened by an all-time easy availability of narcotics pouring into Pakistan from across the 'free-border' of the restive Afghanistan.

Sometime crisis and unrest in one country badly affect the neighbouring and other countries. Pakistan is no exception as far as the Afghan imbroglio is concerned.

Its one and a half million heroin-addicts, who according to a conservative estimate consume about 90 tonnes of heroin, are now fully dependent on fresh massive inflows of the Afghan heroin.

The officials of the Pakistan Narcotics Control Board, who are worried about the easy availability of cheap heroin in the country over the coming months, fear that the increased production in Afghanistan will make its way to Pakistan.

According to a recent report of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), the world, including Pakistan, is faced with more drastic challenges after 90 years of global narcotics control.

As only treaty-mandated curbs could have an effect on the manufacture and consumption of the controlled drugs, the INCB report has made it plain that the menace of illicit drugs and addiction epidemics in some countries may spread to other countries.

Pakistan is the most threatened country in the region as far as the Afghan crisis is concerned and the drastic challenges faced by it require relatively drastic measures.

Sternest security steps are needed to be taken both along Pak-Afghan border, uptown and downtown areas of the cities having the Afghan population.

The anti-narcotics agencies should also mobilised to strike at the heart of the networks and mafia smuggling opium, heroin and other controlled substances into the country.

Taliban team in NWFP to seek reinforcements

By AIMAL KHAN

PESHAWAR — Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia has approached *deeni madarass* (religious institutions) in the NWFP for reinforcements to fight a resurrected opposition Northern Alliance.

A two-member delegation, sent by Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Omar, has held meetings with heads of different seminaries to seek early release of Afghan Taliban for joining fellow fighters in defending Kabul against a possible onslaught from Ahmed Shah Masood's forces.

A source told *The Frontier Post* here Sunday that the delegation, including Maulvi Abul Hasan and Maulvi Sadiq, twice visited Darool Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak, some 45 kilometres northeast of here, to discuss "Afghan religious students' release for defence of their motherland."

The Afghan delegation, the source added, called on Jamiat Ulemai-i-Islam (Sami-ul-Haq group) leaders at the Darool-ul-Uloom Haqqania. "They requested the JUI leaders to release the Afghan students for national duty. Their presence is more necessary on war fronts than in *madrassa*," the Afghan delegation told the JUI leaders.

According to a rough estimate, around 13,000 Afghan students are studying in the NWFP religious institutions. Last year, when the Taliban made a similar request, some 35,000 Afghan students immediately left for Kabul to fight Masood's troops.

"In case the Afghan students are despatched, these institutions may be closed," the source opined. The Taliban delegation also delivered a lecture to convince the Afghan students that Afghanistan badly needed their services at the moment.

The religious institutions still remain a major source of recruitment for the Afghan student militia battling the forces of the Masood-led Northern Alliance.

For unknown reasons, this time the Afghan students are reportedly not taking much of an interest in the Afghan civil conflict, the source added.

Commander Ahmed Shah Masood has on several occasions blamed Pakistan for extending "material" support to Taliban, a charge Islamabad denies.

Bodies of 3 Pakistanis received at Pak-Afghan border

Nation 990808

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — Bodies of three Pakistanis which were received at Torkham on Pak-Afghan border have been despatched to their native villages. Reports reveal that two among three victims belong to Bannu while the third one belongs to the Punjab province.

The reports from Torkham further said that the bodies of Safer son of Omer Shaheen from Bannu, Maulana Mohammad Ishaq son of Mohammad Karim from Bannu and Mohammad Naveed from Shahdara, Lahore were airlifted from Gulbar to north of Kabul through a military helicopter.

The bodies were handed over to Taliban stalwarts in Torkham and later on boarded on wagons so as to despatch

to their native villages.

The reports said that Taliban leaders had decided to send the bodies of those Pakistanis people to their native villages whose identities have confirmed. In this connection, special cards have been issued to the volunteers before leaving for the war fronts.

It is learnt that a large number of people who are the close relatives of the Pakistani students and volunteers are everyday visiting Taliban office at Torkham to know about the fate of their youngsters.

At Torkham, the Taliban office doesn't possess any record of such Pakistanis but registering complaints of these Pakistani visitors and convey such data to their offices in Kabul and Jalalabad.

Afghan elders facing life threats

Nation 990809

Although, majority of the former Afghan politicians who had been instrumental against late Dr. Najib Ullah regime had migrated to European and American countries yet their near and dear ones are still residing in several parts of the province where they are facing threats to their life.

In the wake of mysterious killings of known Afghans and frequent attacks against scores of others, these relatives of the known Afghans have now confined themselves to their houses. Almost all of them intend to get peace and security but they are unable to materialise their dreams due to lack of resources.

The recent war of words between the American-led civilised nation and extremist religious circles so far headed by Arab militant Osama Bin Laden has multiplied grievances of these innocent and helpless people.

They couldn't differentiate between the religious-minded people from both Pakistan and Afghanistan who are reportedly bent upon eliminating those who want a negotiated solution to the long-awaited Afghan conflict, transfer of power to a broad-based interim government and restoration of the lost identity of Afghanistan.

In April 1992, when the regime of late Dr Najib Ullah collapsed, many

of his associates along with their near and dear migrated to Pakistan to escape revenge and harassment from the hands of their erstwhile foes.

Though the Mujahideen forces, had failed to fulfil the promises of a peaceful and Islamic welfare state and their internal differences has not only resulted destruction to Afghanistan and genocide civilians but it has enhanced fear among those who are associated with the ruling Watan Party of late Dr Najib Ullah.

During such a transitional period, a large number of the PDPA, now Watan Party, stalwarts had been brutally killed, their houses were looted and even their young wives and daughters were raped and made hostages by the Jihadic and militia commanders.

As a result of such treatment at the hands of the commanders and self-made generals, a large number of the leading Afghan figures migrated to Pakistan. At that time, Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif was governing the country for the first time as a Prime Minister and he was enjoying association of nationalists like ANP of Wali Khan, PMAP of Mehmood Khan Achakzai and PNP of Hasil Bizenjo. As a result of such alliance, these Af-

ghan elders had found Pakistan a peaceful peaceful country to stay.

Prominent among them were Sulaiman Laiq second in command to late Dr Najib Ullah, Vice President Gen. Rafi, Defence Minister Aslam Watanjar, Saleh Mohammad Zearay, Abdul Qadoos Ghorbandi, Ahmad Bashir Raegar, Hamid Ullah Rogh, Habib Mangal, Abdul Rashid Waziri, Engineer Nazar Mohammad, Haji Mohammad Chamkani, Niaz Mohammad Mohmand, Nimat Ullah Pazhwak, Hadi Mukammil, Zahoor Razamjo, Dastgir Panjsheri, Prof. Mahmood Sooma, Dalili, Miftah Ud Din Safi and others.

However, with the passage of time, almost all of them left for various European, American and other countries. Those who were unable to fly to other countries, remained under constant threats of intimidation. As a result of such threats a number of them like Gen. Nazar Mohammad a former Defence Minister, Gen. Gul Aqa, Mohammad Hasham Khan Paktyaney and dozens of others have joined the list of those Afghans who are being mysteriously killed in Peshawar, Quetta and other parts of Pakistan since 1979. However, after the brutal murder of late Mohammad Hasham Khan Pakty-

aney in October 1998, the remaining family members of late Dr Najib Ullah left for Sweden. Hasham Khan was first cousin of late Dr Najib Ullah.

Soon after the mysterious death of Hasham Khan Paktyaney the remaining relatives of the former ministers and technocrats are faced with serious crisis. Besides daughter of Sulaiman Laiq and a large number of others are facing similar threats including Rashid Waziri. A recent report published by a monthly magazine from Karachi states that about 100,000 US dollars were distributed among the hired professional assassins by the powerful quarters of Afghanistan for carrying out targeted killings of the prominent Afghans in Peshawar.

Besides supporters of the former ruling Watan Party of Dr Najib Ullah, other Afghans who are either favouring a negotiated solution to the conflict or favouring the peace initiatives of former King Mohammad Zahir Shah also facing such threats. Since 1979 when the former Soviet Union invaded its 100,000 troops in Afghanistan, such type of moderate Afghans are the main target of these people who are either patronising the mysterious killing or harassing them for unknown purposes. Former Afghan minister and parliamentarian Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai was the latest target of killers.

Peshawar Diary

From Shamim Shahid

US freezes Afghan airline assets

Nation 990812

"As part of our strategy to isolate bin Laden and his supporters, we will continue to apply sanctions against him and those like the Taliban who support and assist him in carrying out his acts of violence," the White House said. It said it had so far identified \$500,000 in assets held by the airline that would be blocked under the move.

In reply to a question, White House Deputy Press Secretary David Leavy said Ariana has regular flights to India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "And we will be talking with those countries in the days ahead to apply similar sanctions," he said.

The White House said the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control was reviewing reports that some foreign banks, businesses and individuals, including persons in the Middle East, were acting on behalf of or were providing material or financial support for the violent acts of bin Laden.

"Should these reports prove true and if these entities and individuals do not cease their support" to bin Laden, "they could potentially be named as Specially Designated Terrorists and face the same sanctions prohibitions" applied to the Saudi exile, it added.

This would mean that a foreign firm or individual designated for funding the violent acts of bin Laden or his front organisations would be denied access to US banks and financial entities. It would thus be shut out of U.S. markets and any of its property or assets within American jurisdiction would be blocked. The US, long frustrated by the Taliban's giving bin Laden refuge, launched air strikes on August 20, 1998, in retaliation for the embassy bombings in Africa.

WASHINGTON (NNI) - In an apparent bid to punish the Taliban for protecting Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, the US has resorted to drastic action against Afghanistan, freezing all the assets of its Ariana Airlines within American jurisdiction.

The US administration also barred all American entities or individuals from engaging in any business transactions with the Afghan carrier anywhere in the world.

The punitive action, announced by the White House, appears to be aimed at pressuring the Taliban regime into turning over bin Laden, accused of masterminding the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, a year ago and of plotting fresh attacks on American citizens.

The action was taken under authority of a July executive order imposing sanctions on the Taliban, the Islamic militia which controls most of Afghanistan. The US is angry with the Taliban for its "continuing provision of safe haven" to bin Laden.

The action was taken against the regime for "allowing his (bin Laden's) terrorist organisation to operate training camps in territory under Taliban control" and "to use Afghanistan as a base from which to sponsor terrorist operations," a White House statement said. Ariana is the only international carrier with regular flights in and out of Afghanistan. "As such, we are concerned about the role it may play in ferrying material, personnel and finances to the Taliban. By designating the Taliban-controlled Ariana, it will be denied the benefits from dealings with U.S. businesses and financial markets," the statement added.

Afghanistan restores global telecom link

KABUL (Internews) - The ruling Taliban in Afghanistan have restored the facility of international dialing in the country, a top official said Tuesday.

"We restored the international direct dialing facility in Afghanistan," Mulla Allahdad Tabib, the deputy communications minister was quoted as saying by the Radio Sharia.

"Our compatriots will benefit greatly from the revival of the country's international telephone code number, 0093, in their incoming calls," he said.

The communication system of the country, which had not worked for 20 years, stands fully repaired now, he added, announcing that the country's official international telecommunication code number had been reactivated.

"Afghanistan's right, allocated by the United Nations and not utilised for 22 years, will be restored. This is important for our country and fellow countrymen," Mulla Tabib said.

He added that so far two satellite installations had been installed in the Taliban-controlled area by TSI Telecommunications Company of the United States, one in Kabul and another in Kandahar.

With the installations of satellite equipment, Afghanistan has been linked to the rest of the world. In addition, a 500-line digital telephone system has been installed in Kandahar and a 100-

line one in Kabul.

"These are ready for operation and Afghans who live abroad will soon be able to talk to Kabul and Kandahar just by dialing the international code," the deputy minister added.

The system will become operational soon after the code is reallocated. The International Telecommunication Union has agreed to reopen the code at international levels.

Mulla Tabib expressed the hope that this system would soon be installed in Afghanistan's other provinces and cities as well.

About importing and operating mobile phones, the minister of communication said: "We have placed orders for a mobile telephone system with foreign companies and these will soon be ready for operation."

The minister lamented that besides suffering socioeconomic and technical hardship and damage, Afghanistan and its people had been left behind by the progress of developing technology over the past two decades.

"One instance of this is the communications system, which is as important in a country as the nervous system of the human body," he said.

"However, since the establishment of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban, fruitful steps have been taken in the service of the country and fellow-countrymen," he added.

UN urges warring Afghans to respect civilians

News 990811

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations on Tuesday urged the Taliban and their foes to allow thousands displaced by fresh fighting to return home and rebuked warring factions for inflicting fresh suffering on ordinary people.

"Parties responsible for such disasters cannot, cynically, commit such criminal acts, then turn to the United Nations and the international community as a whole to help save their own people from disasters provoked by those who claim to be their country's leaders," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said.

The statement was issued after thousands of people fled the Shomali plains north of Kabul to escape a military showdown between the Taliban and its last real foe, Ahmad Shah Masud.

"The United Nations calls upon the Afghan authorities to allow all civilians, including displaced persons, total freedom of movement. Displaced persons in particular must retain the right to return home in safety and dignity," it said.

Kamal Hossain, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, said: "It is the civilians who have borne the brunt of the fighting, including indiscriminate rocketing and bombing of urban

areas.

"Afghanistan has had more than its share of war-wounded, orphans, widows and disabled," he said in the statement.

The ruling Taliban movement said it cleared the Shomali plains, which has an estimated population of 400,000 people, to protect them from getting caught in the latest offensive.

Several thousand families have been moved to a bombed-out and deserted former Russian embassy in building in Kabul where there is an acute shortage of drinking water and food.

At the same time, Masud has appealed for international aid for 250,000 people he says fled to his Panjsher valley bastion to escape the latest offensive.

The UN said it was providing limited food aid to about 500 families who sought refuge in the building. "Conditions in the crowded compound are less than ideal and the health situation of women and children is of particular concern." It said that forced displacement from the Shomali plains and battle zones in northern Afghanistan appeared to have stopped and it was still trying to assess the numbers involved.—Reuters

Taliban forces claim capture of Bagram airbase

News 990812

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The Taliban again went on the offensive Wednesday against the forces of the opposition Northern Alliance commander, Ahmad Shah Masud, and claimed the capture of the key airbase of Bagram and the towns of: Kalakan and Qarabagh north of Kabul.

Ahmad Wali Masud, a brother of Ahmad Shah Masud and head of Afghanistan's embassy in London, conceded the loss of Kalakan in an interview with the BBC. However, he didn't admit the fall of Bagram and said the two sides were battling for the possession of Qarabagh. However, another opposition spokesman, Bismillah Khan, based in Masud's native Parwan province, admitted the loss of both Kalakan and Qarabagh.

The Taliban, still smarting from their retreat from Shomali area north of Kabul on August 5 after having captured most of Parwan and Kapisa

provinces in a nine-day offensive, reportedly launched their new attack early Wednesday morning from two frontlines and met little resistance as they swept through Kalakan and Qarabagh. Taliban sources said they also took Bagram, sited 60 kilometres north of Kabul, rather easily.

The Taliban military gains set the stage for yet another attempt on their part to seize areas held by Masud in the fertile Shomali valley and inflict a decisive defeat on him. Their past three attempts in 1996, 1997 and the one recently to capture the Masud territory and then retain it proved unsuccessful. On all three occasions, they suffered heavy casualties as ethnic Tajiks loyal to Masud revolted against Taliban rule and forced them to withdraw.

The Taliban, who control about 90 per cent of Afghanistan, have vowed to bring the whole country under their rule by defeating Masud, who is the only military commander

still actively resisting them.

There were also reports of heavy bombings by Taliban jet-fighters on the opposition-controlled towns in the Shomali area. Ahmad Wali Masud in his BBC interview even accused Pakistan government of sending its forces to assist the Taliban in their latest offensive. He alleged that Pakistani jet-fighters had joined the battle and were bombing opposition positions north of Kabul. "It is beyond the Taliban and their air force to fly 100 sorties as is happening now. This is definitely the job of Pakistani planes and pilots," he alleged.

However, a Taliban leader requesting anonymity dismissed the allegations and said the opposition also came up with such excuses after every defeat. The Pakistan government time and again has denied that no Pakistani soldier or militiaman was fighting in Afghanistan and none of its aircraft was involved in any operation there.

Taliban team visits madrassas to recruit Afghans

Bureau Report
News 990812

PESHAWAR: A Taliban delegation on a mission to recruit Afghan students to reinforce their ranks in Afghanistan has visited some more madrassas in NWFP.

The two-member delegation, led by Mulla Abul Hasan Haqqani and including Mulla Sadiq, has undertaken visits to madrassas in southern NWFP. Earlier, it visited the Darul Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak and got a positive response when its head Maulana Samiul Haq agreed to close down his madrassa for 10 days to enable the Afghan students to leave for Afghanistan and reinforce the ruling Taliban. The Taliban delegation carried a message by their supreme leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, addressed to the Afghan students and seeking their support for the Taliban Islamic movement.

Subsequently, some madrassas in Dargai in Mardan and in Bara, Khyber Agency, have been closed down and their Afghan students were now being transported to Afghanistan.

Taliban securing new conquests north of Kabul

Nation 990813

DEH SABZ PASS, Afghanistan (AFP) - Afghanistan's Taliban militia Thursday launched a clean-up operation in several districts captured on the Shamali Plains north of here, militia soldiers and locals coming from the area said.

Villagers who left Qara Bagh, 40 kilometers north of here, said militia soldiers were conducting a house to house search looking for opposition troops before they advanced any further.

They said that frontlines have been pushed back close to a point known as the T-junction on the Old Road where the districts of Gul Dara, Dakou, Kalakan, Istalif, and Qara Bagh are under the Taliban's firm control.

The Taliban drove supporters of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood out of these areas during an intense dawn attack on Wednesday.

Militia soldiers manning a checkpoint on Deh Sabz Pass, 35 kilometers north of Kabul, also said the Taliban would focus on securing the Shamali districts.

"A clean-up operation is under way. We want to go ahead step by step in order not to repeat the same mistakes," a Taliban commander told journalists.

Last week the Taliban took the Shamali region and areas in the adjacent Parwan and Kapisa provinces but they were pushed back in a counter-offensive by Masood after holding their ground for just three days.

Anti-Taliban groups claimed they had killed around 800 Taliban soldiers in the surprise counter attack.

Deh Sabz Pass on the New Road leads to Bagram airbase, another 50 kilometers further north, which the Taliban described as a no-man's land.

"Nobody controls the airport," the commander said, adding journalists who intended to drive towards Bagram needed permission from Mulla Rabbani, the Taliban's second in command.

Plumes of smoke were seen columning skywards from villages in Qara Bagh.

Taliban soldiers said houses had caught fire during the fighting.

"The bushes and the firewood, people had stocked for winter had caused the fire," the militia commander said.

However, a local carrying his family on a donkey said the Taliban had burnt some houses. "Yes they are burning some of the houses," he said.

Masood has accused the Taliban of torching people's houses and levelling their gardens and farmlands.

Displaced villagers, on their way to the capital, carried a few belongings, cattle and water and said the militia told them to leave their houses.

The locals, mostly women, children

and elderly people said they left home at dawn and had walked out in 40 degree Centigrade heat.

Earlier the Afghan opposition accused the Taliban and their Pakistani supporters of adopting a scorched earth policy in the latest round of fighting on front lines north of Kabul.

An opposition spokesman said in a statement that homes had been torched, vineyards, orchards and cultivated land had been levelled to deter the local population from returning.

"The objective by the enemy as observed from Kalakan, Guldara, Dakou and Istalif is clearly the complete forced deportation of the civilian population, including women and children through wreaking havoc."

The statement said heavy artillery barrages and air sorties including the use of cluster bombs on August 10 had preceded the withdrawal of the opposition from the combat zone.

Masood controls the northeastern provinces and stands as the last obstacle capable of thwarting total Taliban control of Afghanistan, after five years of civil war. The militia already controls most of the country.

Opposition claims were carried in a press statement issued by its foreign affairs department which is headed by Masood's main spokesman Abdullah.

Smuggling of heroin 'ingredients' to Afghanistan on the rise

FR

990817

By F.M. SHAKIL

PESHAWAR - Trafficking in contraband substances to war-ravaged Afghanistan has lately been stepped up as demand for acids and chemicals used in manufacturing heroin has been on the wane in the tribal market.

The network of heroin laboratories in tribal areas is gradually being shifted to remote, inaccessible parts of Afghanistan, official sources Monday told *The Frontier Post*.

The sources revealed that the acids and chemicals used in heroin production were smuggled across the Durand Line together with second-hand items and scrap.

In connivance with officials posted at Torkham, local exporters dealing in scrap and second-hand goods smuggle these chemical drums under bogus invoices.

"Just a single drum taken to Afghanistan fetches a handsome profit in addition to meeting tax obligations and transportation expenses," the sources continued, accusing personnel of law-enforcing agencies of taking Rs 5000 in bribes to allow one truck to cross the Pak-Afghan border.

The chemical drums are generally concealed in heaps of scrap and daily-use items. Valid export documents are prepared to give the narcotic ingredients trafficking a legal cover.

Tribal areas were no more a safe sanctuary for running heroin labs, they pointed out, saying that the tribal belt had until recently been a centre of quality heroin

produced in makeshift labs situated not too far away from the provincial metropolis.

The stringent measures adopted recently by sensitive agencies under pressure from the US have, however, prompted these heroin manufacturers to shift their business to Jalalabad, Sarobi and interior Afghanistan.

"It is comparatively easy to smuggle the finished and refined stuff from Afghanistan to European and American markets via Central Asian republics and Turkey," said an Afghan source, who alleged that Taliban provided protection and patronage to these labs and in return collected huge sums.

Sources close to local exporters claimed that some NGC

with the support of SAFRAN, were involved in large-scale export of edibles and daily-use items to Afghanistan.

They said that in defiance of instructions from the Commerce Ministry, the powerful SAFRAN was issuing permits for the export of essential commodities, including edible oils, sugar, flour and a

host of other consumer items, to Afghanistan.

The local exporters have lodged a string of complaints with the relevant quarters but of no avail. They claimed that a majority of SAFRAN permits were being misused by unscrupulous elements, who smuggle contraband items including chemicals and acids used in the manufacture of heroin.

Over 5,000 religious students leave for Kabul

News 990813

By Abdullah Jan

PESHAWAR: More than 5,000 students from different religious schools in Frontier left for Afghanistan Thursday to reinforce the Taliban ranks in their "holy war" against the northern opposition alliance.

"Today, we dispatched at least 5,000 men," said a Taliban source in Peshawar, requesting not to be named. He said about 300 Toyota Hiace vans, each carrying 18 Taliban, left for interior of the war-battered country from different parts of the Frontier and the adjoining tribal areas.

Students leaving for Afghanistan also include Pakistani nationals, whose families have no objection. "They have to show the willingness of their parents," said another Taliban source. "Only 2 per cent of the students with us are Pakistani. The rest are Afghans," explained Maulvi Liaqat, an official of a madrassa in Peshawar.

"This process is to continue for another two-three days," said a representative of the Taliban movement offices (Numaindagi) in Peshawar Maulvi Amirullah.

"I am going to cleanse the Afghan society of all the evils," said an enthusiastic Zabiullah, 20, a student of Darul Uloom Darvesh, Pe-

shawar, which sent about 1,000 students for fighting along the militia. Hailing from Laghman province in central Afghanistan, Zabi is to fight his first jihad.

Another 1,000 Taliban from Darul Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak, about 50 kilometres east of Peshawar, left in 25 vehicles for the Pak-Afghan border at Torghum in Khyber Agency for their onward journey to the Afghan capital via Jalalabad.

Reports reaching here from the southern districts of the Frontier revealed that 750 students of Darul Uloom Zargari on the outskirts of Hangu were dispatched to the eastern Khost province of Afghanistan. They are to travel to Kabul via Gardez and Logar provinces from Khost. A total of 2,500 students left different madrassas in Kohat and Hangu districts in south of the Frontier. A Darul Uloom in Kahi area in Hangu proper, Darul Uloom Bara in Khyber Agency and Darul Uloom, Dagai, in Mardan also sent their students to participate in "jihad".

Exceptions exist even among the students of religious schools, with no love for jihad in Afghanistan. "I'm against this jihad and am not going to Afghanistan," said a Tajik student of a madrassa in Peshawar who hails from the Panjsher valley,

the hometown of Commander Ahmad Shah Masud in Kapisa province. He asked for anonymity.

Maulvi Amirullah said once inside Afghanistan, Taliban administration will provide conveyance to the new corners. "They will travel direct to the frontline," he informed.

Religious schools in NWFP were closed down temporarily on a special request by the ruling Taliban of Afghanistan. The students militia need immediate reinforcement to respond to the recent counter attacks by Commander Ahmad Shah Masud-led northern alliance.

A two-member delegation of Taliban administration in Kabul visited the religious schools in NWFP and Balochistan, asking the schools administration to declare holidays so that students could go for "jihad".

Most of the madrassas in the Frontier have been closed down for 10 days while others for a fortnight. There are still others having been closed for an unspecified period of time. Classes are suspended only for the older students while the youngsters will continue to attend their classes. "Below 15 are not allowed to go," explained Amirullah.

Before leaving to reinforce the Taliban fighters, those leaving for Afghanistan were delivered sermons by their teachers early Thursday morning.

Annan condemns Taliban for displacement of civilians

News 990818

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly condemned Afghanistan's Taliban 'government' for forcibly relocating thousands of civilians and demanded that the Taliban observe international humanitarian law.

In a statement here on Tuesday, he urged the parties to immediately end the conflict and take measures to ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

On July 28, the Taliban launched a summer offensive in northern Afghanistan and scored early victories. But opposition forces loyal to Tajik leader Ahmed Shah Massoud have driven the Taliban from most of the newly won territory.

Annan's spokesman Manoel de Almeida-e-Silva said the UN chief was deeply distressed and alarmed by reports of widespread violations of human rights and international hu-

manitarian law in Afghanistan, especially in the Shomali valley about 25 miles north of Kabul.

He claimed that Taliban fighters burned down villages and crops in the newly captured Shomali valley and forced men, women and children out of their homes.

Since the weekend, the United Nations said about 19,000 people from the Shomali valley have entered the capital Kabul.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, the Taliban have arrested about 1,000 displaced men among the new arrivals in Kabul, all Tajiks.

The secretary-general called on the warring parties to ensure the safe and free movement of relief workers.

Annan asserted that however, the primary responsibility for the welfare of the Afghan civilians rests with those who had displaced them from

their homes.

The secretary-general is also deeply concerned over reports that students as young as 14 were involved in the fighting and called on the warring parties to respect the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The convention, adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and signed by all members except Somalia and the United States, affirms the right of children to special protection, opportunities and facilities for a healthy, normal development.

Earlier this month, the UN Security Council condemned the Taliban offensive and demanded that the militia resume peace talks that failed last month.

In a statement, the Council hinted at possible future action against the Taliban to compel the militia to comply with UN demands for peace.—AP

Afghan opposition claims more gains

News 990818

Bureau Report

Says 80 Taliban killed; Islamic militia denies

PESHAWAR: A military commander of the anti-Taliban alliance claimed Tuesday that Asmar district in Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan had fallen to the opposition.

Malik Zarin told The News that the Asmar town fell at 4 pm after day-long fighting in which eight to ten Taliban soldiers were killed.

"We lost a commander, Haji Qayyum, and one of our fighters, Gulnoor, was wounded in the fighting," he said through his son from Dir district of Pakistan bordering Kunar. He said the towns of Dangam and Nishagram were still in Taliban hands.

Earlier, Taliban official Mulla Atiqullah, who is head of the information department in Jalalabad, denied the opposition claims and said Asmar, Khewa, Darra-i-Noor and Narang were all in Taliban control and the attacks by the rebels had

been repulsed.

He said the local people too resisted the attacks and the attackers left many dead and wounded. He also claimed the opposition attacks in Laghman province were being fought off.

Senior Taliban spokesman, Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawwakil, earlier said Ghor provincial capital, Chaghchan, was firmly in Taliban hands.

He said Bagram airbase was presently a no-man's land and the frontlines north of Kabul were near Qarabagh and Kalakan.

AFP adds: The Afghan opposition said Tuesday it had launched a series of surprise attacks on Taliban forces in a bid to pile pressure on the Islamic militia and draw its troops away from the capital Kabul.

Opposition spokesman Abdullah said 80 Taliban soldiers were killed in an attack in the the eastern provinces of Kunar, Laghman and

Nangarhar near the Pakistan border and the Khyber Pass.

A further 12 Taliban died during a strike on militia positions in central Ghor province where the opposition temporarily held the provincial capital of Chaghchharan, he said.

"One of the aims of these operations is to draw Taliban soldiers away from Kabul front lines and to put more pressure on the militia," Abdullah said.

The Taliban has pushed the Kabul front lines back to 50 kilometres (30 miles) north of the capital since it launched its summer offensive.

Abdullah said fighting was heavy Tuesday morning near Asadabad in central Kunar.

"These operations prove the Taliban lie, their claims that they have brought security to Afghanistan. People rise against them whenever they can seize the opportunity," he said.

The Kabul front lines were quiet Tuesday.

Fp 990819

Afghan religious students pose serious threat to law & order

By IMTIAZ HUSSAIN

PESHAWAR - Law-enforcing agencies fear that Afghan students studying in different NWFP seminaries pose a potential threat to law and order in the province.

"The threat has become all the more menacing after students of Afghan origin were stopped from going to Kabul to provide reinforcements to Taliban," a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Interior told The Frontier Post Wednesday.

The Taliban recently sought reinforcements from religious institutions in the NWFP for their summer offensive against the

forces of Ahmad Shah Masood. He said the local people too resisted the attacks and the attackers left many dead and wounded. He also claimed the opposition attacks in Laghman province were being fought off.

Senior Taliban spokesman, Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawwakil, earlier said Ghor provincial capital, Chaghchan, was firmly in Taliban hands. He said Bagram airbase was presently a no-man's land and the frontlines north of Kabul were near Qarabagh and Kalakan.

AFP adds: The Afghan opposition said Tuesday it had launched a series of surprise attacks on Taliban forces in a bid to pile pressure on the Islamic militia and draw its troops away from the capital Kabul.

Opposition spokesman Abdullah said 80 Taliban soldiers were killed in an attack in the the eastern provinces of Kunar, Laghman and

of which 32 are being run through the foreign money whereas the remaining are being run through Zakat funds. In Mardan, Kohat, D.I. Khan, Hazara and Swat divisions, about 679 religious seminaries are functioning, of which about 400 are run by foreign countries.

There are institutions in the tribal and Northern areas which are run by individuals. "The total number of registered religious institutions is about 1000," a source in the provincial government disclosed.

He informed that there were some neutral religious institutions in the province which are so far

forces of Ahmad Shah Masood.

The government of Pakistan, however, did not allow such students to cross the Durand Line for joining Taliban forces. Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz confirmed earlier in the week that students from Pakistani seminaries had been barred from going to Kabul.

It will be relevant to mention here in passing that 15,700 students of Afghan origin are enrolled in different religious institutions across the NWFP. These hard-core students are seen as potential support to the orthodox militia, which controls almost 90 per cent of Afghanistan.

In addition to the Afghan stu-

to perceive," he noted.

"Seen against the backdrop of the recent spate of warnings from religious scholars to the United States against a possible attack on Afghanistan, stopping Afghan students from going to their country might cause trouble for the provincial government," a Frontier police official opined.

It was learnt that a meagre number of the institutions, working in the NWFP, are funded through Zakat funds. A large number of these are funded by the Arab countries.

For instance, there are 48 religious institutions functioning in Peshawar and its adjacent areas,

away from any politics inside or outside the country.

The sources said that there were serious reservations of the foreign missions, working in the NWFP, about the existence of the institutions. They said that about a week back, a senior official of the US government arrived in Peshawar and particularly discussed this issue with his local counterparts.

It was learnt that the activities of the religious institutions were also monitored by some foreigners, following the threats by some religious parties to US citizens, who reached here, early last month.

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Taliban claim gains against opposition

News 990823

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's Taliban militia Sunday claimed it had driven out opposition troops from a key district in eastern Laghman province after several days of fighting.

"The district of Daulat Shah was retaken by Taliban this morning after three hours of fighting," the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted a senior Taliban official as saying.

Maulvi Sadar Aziz, the Islamic militia's deputy chief in the eastern zone, told the Pakistan-based agency that the attack on the district was launched after wiping out opposition in three nearby pockets. The rival troops had now been virtually driven out of the whole province, the Taliban official said.

He said the Taliban had already "crushed opposition intrusion" in two other eastern provinces, Kunar and Nangarhar. No independent confirmation of the Taliban claim or any comment from the opposition

was immediately available.

Forces loyal to anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masud earlier this month claimed to have taken several districts in the eastern region bordering Afghanistan in a series of surprise attacks.

The opposition said the attacks were aimed at drawing Taliban troops away from the Kabul frontlines. The Islamic militia, which controls more than 80 per cent of Afghanistan, launched a major offensive north of Kabul on July 28 in a bid to neutralise Masud, the last hurdle to Taliban control of the entire country.

After initial setbacks, Masud's forces contained the Taliban push towards his traditional bastion of northeastern Panjsher valley, 100 kilometres from Kabul. The frontlines, now located 50 kilometres from Kabul, have been relatively quiet for the past several days.—AFP

US accounts freeze fails to hit Ariana Afghan flights

News 990823

DUBAI: Operations of Afghanistan's national airline Ariana remain uninterrupted almost two weeks after the United States froze \$ 500,000 of the airline's assets, an airline official in the United Arab Emirates said on Sunday.

The US government said this month it had identified \$ 500,000 of Ariana's assets that would be blocked and was banning US firms and individuals from doing business with the airline as part of moves to put pressure on the Islamic Taliban militia to stop protecting Saudi-born dissident Osama-bin Laden.

Mullah Farid Ahmad, Ariana's UAE station manager, said the airline was not involved in politics. "This is an airline. This is not involved in any politics. The airline is working for civilian people," he told Reuters.

The United States has accused Bin Laden of involvement in the bombing of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last year.—Reuters

Taliban holding 1,000 ethnic Tajik men: UNHCR

GENEVA: One thousand ethnic Tajik men are being held by the Taliban in Kabul after fleeing fighting to the north of the Afghan capital, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said Tuesday.

The men were part of a new wave of around 20,000 people displaced by fighting between the Taliban and opposition forces. They have been arriving in Kabul since the weekend, UNHCR spokeswoman Judith Kumin said here.

She said the new wave of displaced were mainly families arriving on foot from the Panjsher Valley.

Those arrested were ethnic Tajik, Kumin said.

The Taliban, which controls most of Afghanistan, is mainly ethnic Pashtoon from Afghanistan's southern provinces.

Opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masud, meanwhile, commands a multi-ethnic force which includes Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmen.

The opposition controls the northeastern provinces from the heavily-fortified Panjsher Valley, which lies just beyond the Kabul front lines.

The Taliban launched a summer offensive against opposition forces on July 28.

The UNHCR said almost 60,000 people displaced by the fighting were now sheltering in Kabul and a further 100,000 had fled towards the north of the country, to an area bordering Tajikistan.—AFP

Cholera epidemic claims 660 lives in Afghanistan

News 990825

KABUL: A cholera epidemic has spread through a refugee community in central Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, killing more than 660 people in the last 10 days, most of them children, opposition spokesman Mohammed Arif said Tuesday.

Arif said 250,000 people who fled the bitter fighting in Parwan and Kapisa provinces, north of Kabul, are huddled homeless in the Panjshir Valley, the stronghold of opposition leader Ahmed Shah Masood.

The conditions are horrific, he told The Associated Press in a satellite telephone interview.

"We have no shelter for these people. They are living under the trees," he said.

Cholera spread through the refugee population in the last two weeks causing the death of more than 660, he said. Many of the dead, according to Arif, are children who already were weak from lack of food.

Arif's figures or information about the epidemic could not be in-

dependently confirmed, however a delegation from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees currently is in the Panjshir Valley to assess the conditions there.

The most desperately needed items are shelter material, like plastic sheeting, food and wood for fires, he said. Some help has come from aid organizations but it has only begun to trickle in, he said.

"We need so much and we have received very little, the refugees are angry," he said.

The refugees fled to the Panjshir Valley, some 56 miles north of Kabul, after heavy fighting broke out last month between the Taliban religious army which rules most of Afghanistan and the northern-based alliance.

The Taliban gained control of both Parwan and Kapisa provinces from the opposition in heavy fighting. The opposition later regained control. The fighting was intense with both sides using heavy weapons and the Taliban religious army said to have used helicopter gun ships and fighter jets.—AP

Afghan opp rejects Pakistan's peace bid

DUSHANBE (AFP) - Afghan groups allied to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood have rejected Pakistan's offer to mediate in peace talks with the Taliban, an Afghan delegation said here Thursday.

"We have rejected the mediation proposal of the Pakistan delegation," said Muhammad Yunus Konuni, head of the Afghan delegation.

"We explained to the Pakistani representatives that they cannot act as mediators because a mediator is a neutral and impartial person and they are at war against us," he told reporters.

Konuni, who met with Interior Secretary Rustam Shah in the Tajik capital, called on Pakistan to end its support for the Taliban militia and to "withdraw its forces from Afghan territory."

Islamabad has repeatedly denied claims that it is supporting the Taliban, an Islamic hardline militia which now controls most of Afghanistan.

But delegations from the Afghan opposition and Pakistan

will meet again next week although no firm date or venue for the talks have been set.

Another AFP report from Kabul said that talks between Afghanistan's 'opposition' and Pakistan aimed at ending the Afghan civil war failed after Islamabad denied any formal support for the ruling Taliban regime, the opposition said Wednesday.

"There were two perceptions. Pakistan's was that they had come to try and mediate but this was not our perception," the opposition's main spokesman Abdullah said of today's talks in Dushanbe.

"Our first problem is they are using regular army Pakistan troops and so called volunteers to support the Taliban and we asked them to pull them out. It's obvious, the whole world knows about this and they denied it," he said.

"It was a failed meeting, in fact."

Abdullah accused Pakistan of trying to be "policeman and judge" but added "they kept denying all involvement".

UN provides aid to war-affectedees

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - The United Nations has begun providing limited food assistance to civilians displaced by the recent fighting around the front lines north of Kabul. So far, approximately five hundred families, who have found refuge in an abandoned diplomatic compound in Kabul, are being assisted. The World Food Programme, in collaboration with the NGO MEDAIR, has provided one time food aid to these families, while Habitat and CARE are establishing sanitary facilities. Conditions in the crowded compound are less than ideal, and the health situation of women and children is of particular concern.

The United Nations was first alerted about significant population displacement on August 2. While forced displacement from the Shomali valley area seems to have ceased, the United Nations is still trying to determine the numbers affected both in Kabul and in northern Afghanistan. This task has been complicated by what appear to be inflated reports of civilian displacement, issued by both sides to the conflict.

In addition to the families accommodated in diplomatic compound, a large number of other recently displaced families in Kabul have found refuge with friends and relatives in the capital. Staff from the United Nations, the Red Cross, Medicines sans Frontiers (MSF), MEDAIR, and CARE are assessing their health and living conditions.

While there is sufficient food and medicine for those in need at present, the United Nations in Afghanistan and Tajikistan is making contingency arrangements to pre-position humanitarian supplies in the event of increased need. An assessment mission in Badakhshan has advised that such pre-positioning is necessary under the present circumstances.

Taliban deny recruiting children

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban have denied recruiting children for military service in Afghanistan terming such reports as irresponsible and uncalled for. In an interview with the BBC, a senior spokesman for the Taliban, Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, said they had never tried to recruit children for military service rather have set up high-powered commissions to purge the armed forces of children. Taliban, he said, had tried to withdraw those who have secretly or voluntarily gone to the frontlines because their presence cannot prove beneficial at all to the Taliban.

UN flays youth involvement in Afghan conflict

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The United Nations is "worried" over the increasing recruitment of young students from religious schools in Pakistan by the Taliban to fight in Afghanistan. UN officials said Friday.

"The process has been going on for sometime and we are worried it is increasing," UNICEF representative for Afghanistan, Louis-Georges Arsenault, told reporters at the UN information centre here.

A Taliban delegation recently visited Pakistan to recruit around 2,500 Afghan and Pakistani youths from seminaries in the northwestern region, he said.

Earlier this month the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan himself expressed "deep concern" over reports of the involvement in the conflict of students, some as young as 14.

Annan called on the warring parties to respect the convention on the rights of the child.

Arsenault would not "quantify" how many youths were involved in the Afghan fighting, but reports in the Pakistani press last week said more than 5,000 students, mostly Afghans, had left to join the Taliban ranks.

UN coordinator for Afghanistan, Broneck Szynalski, said tens of thousands of Afghans displaced by the fighting north of Kabul over the past several weeks should be allowed by the Taliban to return to their homes.

He said 30,000 to 40,000 people had fled to Kabul since the beginning of August and around 70,000 had taken refuge in the Panjsher valley, the base of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Non-governmental international humanitarian groups in Panjsher have put the number of refugees in the valley at 100,000.

Szynalski urged the warring parties to realize the gravity of the mounting humanitarian problem and respond to UN calls to sit down to settle disputes and end the bloody civil war.

Afghani scholar offers reward for Clinton's head

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - An Afghan religious scholar Sunday offered to pay a reward of five million afghanis (113 dollars) to anyone who killed US President Bill Clinton, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said.

The scholar, Maulana Abdur Rahim Muslimdost, told AIP his offer was in retaliation for the five-million-dollar reward posted by the United States for the arrest of Osama bin Laden.

"I will pay five million afghanis for anyone who kills Bill Clinton. It is little, but in my view his head is not worth more," the scholar quoted Muslimdost as saying.

The scholar, who lives in Peshawar, said the US 'is the biggest terrorist in the world and an enemy who wants to destroy Muslims'.

He warned any US attack against Afghanistan for sheltering Osama would entail 'dangerous consequences'.

Several local dailies also said a Pakistani religious leader, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamsai, issued a Fatwa Saturday, calling on Muslims to wage war against America.

Sahmzai, President of Majlis Taawan Islami, issued the Fatwa in a speech at a seminar, accusing the US of hatching conspiracies against the Islamic world, the reports said.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Saturday condemned last year's missile raid and accused Washington itself of terrorism.

Omar escapes unhurt in Kandahar blast

News 990826

10 killed, 35 injured; United States, Northern Alliance deny involvement

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: A powerful car bomb explosion outside the home of Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar in Kandahar, southwestern Afghanistan, Tuesday night killed at least 10 persons and caused injury to another 35.

Senior Taliban spokesman, Mulla Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, told The News that Mulla Omar and members of his family escaped the bombing and were safe.

Speaking from Kandahar, he said among the 10 victims of the blast were some of Mulla Omar's security guards and his house was also partially damaged.

Eyewitnesses in Kandahar said the explosion was so huge that their own houses in distant parts of the city were rattled by its impact.

They said the explosion kicked up so much dust and stones that they thought the US, which on August 20 last year attacked Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden's hideouts in Khost in southern Afghanistan with cruise missiles, has again started raining missiles on their country.

However, it became clear by Wednesday morning that a lorry stuffed with explosives had exploded at the gate of Mulla Omar's house in Kandahar's posh Shahre Nau locality at 10.02 pm Tuesday night.

Traffic becomes thin by this time in Kandahar as the daily night-time curfew starts at 11 pm and, therefore, the securitymen at Mulla Omar's home were alerted when they saw the truck suspiciously parked near their gate.

Sources in Kandahar said the lorry exploded when the security

guards ignited its engine to drive it away. They said all those killed were blown into pieces and it was difficult to retrieve their body organs or identify them. Among the victims were a number of bypassers.

The Taliban immediately cordoned-off the Shahre Nau area, where the offices of UN, ICRC and several NGOs are located and is the abode of top Taliban leaders.

The Pakistani consulate, whose doors and windows were also damaged by the impact of the blast, is also located in Shahre Nau. Sources said nobody was allowed Wednesday

to go near the site of the blast, making information-gathering difficult. All this while, Taliban ambulances kept coming and going and their leaders visited Mulla Omar's home.

The sources said the explosion was so severe that it dug up a big crater and water in the ground and scores of buildings in Shahre Nau and its adjoining localities suffered damage. The buildings which suffered partial damage included those housing the governor's guest-house, Radio Shariat Kandahar and foreign ministry.

Taliban spokesman Mutawakil said investigations had been launched to unearth those who sponsored the explosion. "No arrest has yet been made and we don't want to blame anyone prematurely," he said.

When asked whether he suspected Taliban's internal or external opponents for the blast, he said the Taliban had many enemies and it wasn't yet clear as to who was behind this act of terror and cowardice.

Another Taliban spokesman, Mulla Abdul Hye Mutmain, told The News that the conspirators had failed in their attempt to eliminate Mulla Omar. "It was a well-planned and sophisticated job and it must have required months of planning," he opined.

Though the Taliban refrained from publicly accusing anyone for the bombing, their supporters in Afghanistan and Pakistan pointed out that they have a number of enemies

ranging from the opposition Northern Alliance to the US and its allies as well as Iran.

Most of them pointed accusing fingers at the US and alleged it had the capability to make available such a huge quantity of explosives to paid agents and carry out a sophisticated job.

The bombing of Mulla Omar's home in the headquarters of his five-year old Taliban Islamic movement also raised questions about the level and quality of Taliban security.

Observers noted that it wasn't the first time that the lapses in the Taliban security arrangements had been exposed and enabled their opponents to target the founder and supreme leader of their movement.

Reuters adds: The White House said on Wednesday that the United States was not involved in a bombing

near the residence of the supreme leader of the country's Taliban movement.

"We're aware of the explosion but we're not aware of the origins of that explosion beyond knowing that it was not something we were involved in," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart told reporters here covering

President Bill Clinton's vacation.

Meanwhile, the US embassy in Islamabad conveyed the following statement from the Department of State in Washington: "We have received reports about a large explosion in Kandahar, Afghanistan Tuesday night local time. We cannot confirm the extent of damage of injuries. The United States government was not involved in any way in this incident. Statements to the contrary are baseless."

AFP adds: Afghanistan's anti-Taliban alliance said Wednesday it was not responsible for any assassination attempt on the life of the ruling Taliban's supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Opposition general Sayed Anwari said Tuesday's massive bomb explosion near Omar's house was the result of frustrated locals venting their anger at the militia.

"We cannot take responsibility for this act. We have not done it. This is the reaction of the people of Kandahar after Pakistan religious scholars announced a Jihad against Afghan people," he said.

"There will be more of such incidents against Pakistan," Anwari said.

"The Kandahar blast is the reaction of the people of Kandahar against the Pakistani invasion. This shows the hatred of our freedom loving people against Mulla Omar who brought the Pakistanis to Afghanistan," Anwari said. "This spirit is strengthening," he added.

NNI adds: A group of Pakistani religious scholars remained unhurt in the huge bomb explosion in Kandahar, sources close to the idema team said Wednesday.

A five-member delegation of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Sarniul Haq group) Balochistan province was staying in governor Kandahar's rest house, which was very close to the venue of the blast, JUI sources said.

"The delegation had gone to Kandahar to renew support to Taliban in their move to protect Osama bin Laden in the wake of American threats," they said. The delegation included Maulana Shan-ud-Din Akhundzada, Maulvi Abdul Karim, Maulvi Faizullah, Abu Ajmal and Maulvi Ahmed Shah Abdullahzai.

The JUI leaders were scheduled to meet Taliban leaders, including the militia's supreme leaders Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Two Taliban Governors killed in car explosion

Nation 990828

Pakistan for end to interference in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Two Taliban provincial governors have been killed in an explosion at the town of Baghlan in northern Afghanistan, the Afghan opposition claimed Friday.

The Governor of Balkh, Mullah Akhtar Qandahari, and the Governor of Kunduz, Arif Khan, died when a vehicle in which they were travelling exploded in 'mysterious circumstances' late Thursday, an opposition spokesman said in a statement.

The spokesman, General Sayed Hussein Anwari, also claimed that the police chief of Kunduz, Mirzah Nasseiri, was 'critically' injured.

His comments were sent here from the Panjsher stronghold of main opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

The report could not be independently confirmed and no immediate comment was available from the Taliban.

On Tuesday a massive truck bomb exploded close to the home of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in the Kandahar headquarters city of the Islamic militia, leaving 10 people dead and widespread devastation.

The Taliban said the bombing was an attempt to kill the Taliban leader, who survived the attack.

APP adds: Pakistan Friday asked "some countries in the neighbourhood and beyond" to desist from lending support to certain factions in Afghanistan.

en several rounds of shuttle diplomacy between the parties on either side of the Afghan divide in the hope of bridging their differences.

The latest exercise, he said, was completed only a few days ago when a delegation from Pakistan visited Tajikistan twice to meet with the representatives of Engineer Ahmad Shah Masood and went to Kandahar to meet with the supreme leader of Taliban.

However, the Pakistani Envoy stressed that "our bilateral efforts to promote a peace process in Afghanistan are aimed at supplementing and not supplanting the efforts and the work of the United Nations, the OIC and the Six Plus Two countries."

Pakistan, he said, has welcomed and is actively engaged in the Six Plus Two process in the shared endeavour to bring normalcy to Afghanistan.

He underlined that durable peace in Afghanistan is possible only on the basis of an intra-Afghan consensus and any solution of the Afghan conflict must be indigenous.

"Afghan history is witness to the fact that the external solutions cannot be imposed on the fiercely independent people of Afghanistan."

Inam said, Pakistan understands this reality.

"It has no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Nor does it harbour any illusions about its ability to control or change the course of events in Afghanistan."

He said, it would be folly for any country to seek to control the destiny of Afghanistan.

FP 990820 Pakistan denies interference in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Shamshad Ahmed categorically rejected allegations of Pakistan's involvement in the fighting in Afghanistan.

"These are totally malicious and baseless allegations. These are nothing but a figment of the imagination of those who want conflict in Afghanistan to continue for their own ulterior motives," he said.

Those who have provided "weapons, ammunition logistic support and military training to the Afghan opposition have wrongly accused Pakistan of providing similar assistance to Taliban."

Pakistan has all along been working for restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

"We seek peace in that country through negotiations and dialogue. It is for the Afghan people themselves to decide which and what type of government they want to have."

See page 15

'Taliban razing agricultural setup'

News 990828

ISLAMABAD: United Nations officials here Friday reported that Taliban have been committing "systematic destruction" of agricultural infrastructure north of Kabul in the fertile Shamali plain seized by the militia this month.

"Previously Taliban authorities burned houses and crops, but they are now engaged in systematic destruction of agricultural infrastructure," a spokeswoman for the UN coordinator for Afghanistan told reporters.

Stephanie Bunker, citing information collected by independent monitors from displaced people arriving in Kabul, said the destruction included irrigation work and would have serious "long term consequences."

She said the number of war-dis-

placed seeking shelter in Kabul was now approaching 40,000 with 200 to 300 new families reaching the Afghan capital every day.

Bunker did not give the possible motive for the destruction, but sources linked it to Taliban military strategy to force the local population to stay away because of their suspected hostility toward the militia.

Another 65,000 to 70,000 people uprooted by recent fighting between the Taliban and opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood's forces north of Kabul were in his Panjsher valley stronghold, 100 kilometers northeast of the capital.

The number was based on estimates by an aid group operating in Panjsher, while the UN awaits the return next week of its five-member as-

essment mission currently in the area, Bunker said.

In Kabul, food assistance from the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) was being distributed among several thousand refugees camping in the diplomatic compound there, with local authorities also providing bread daily.

The UN has extended food distribution among the displaced for 30 days, Bunker said.

She said more than 100 tonnes of WFP food from Tajikistan would reach the Panjsher valley in a few days.

"The UN is particularly concerned about the plight of some 15,000 refugees in Panjsher who are living without shelter and blankets and have little to eat," Bunker said. — AFP

160,000 displaced in recent Afghan fighting: UNHCR

News 990828

GENEVA: Around 160,000 people in northeastern Afghanistan have been displaced because of the recent outbreak of fighting there between the Taliban and opposition fighters, the UN refugee agency said Friday.

"This displacement is continuing in a fairly stable way," the spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Kris Janowski, said. He added that the refugees — called internally displaced persons (IDPs) by the agency — were escaping areas controlled by groups "which they do not feel comfortable with."

However, Janowski said that "it is generally believed that there are unlikely to be large outflows, either to Pakistan or Tajikistan, unless the mil-

itary situation in the Panjshir (Valley) were to change drastically."

The UNHCR had received assurances from those countries that the borders would remain open. The spokesman said a UN inter-agency mission which had arrived last week in the Panjshir Valley, just north of Kabul, estimated that around 100,000 refugees were there.

Another 30,000-40,000 were in the Afghan capital Kabul, Janowski said, adding that their numbers were increasing by "an estimated rate of around 150 persons per day." And more than 10,000 refugees were in the Kunduz area, he said, explaining that that area was one of the hardest to access, meaning life was especially difficult for refugees there.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the UN Human Rights Commissioner, Jose-Luis Diaz, said a special rapporteur intended to travel to Afghanistan next month to investigate allegations of human rights violations against women in the country.

The rapporteur, Radhika Coomaraswamy, will visit between September 1 and 12 if security conditions permit, Diaz said. He added that the Taliban, the fundamentalist Islamic movement which controls most of Afghanistan, had promised to cooperate with Coomaraswamy if she was able to make the trip.

Coomaraswamy will stop over in Pakistan en route to Afghanistan to meet Afghan women's groups and victims there, Diaz said. —AFP

'UN reputation taking beating in Afghanistan'

News 990828

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations reputation as a neutral body is taking a beating in Afghanistan where US and British nationals working for the global body are banned from entering the troubled country, Eric de Mul, the head of the UN said here Friday.

"This is frustrating... it sends the wrong signal to the people," he said in an interview. In March the United States and Britain asked the UN to ban its nationals from working in Afghanistan. The UN Secretary General agreed, although the UN charter says governments can not interfere with the postings of their nationals.

"For some it was devastating," that the United Nations conceded to the US and British demands, said de Mul, the UN's Afghanistan coordinator. "As far as I am concerned it is a very bad

precedent." At the time the ban was to be temporary, "a matter of a few days or weeks," until the United Nations could investigate US and British security concerns, said de Mul. That was March and de Mul said he has been arguing relentlessly since then for an end to the ban. "It is frustrating," he said. The Taliban say the ban is indicative of US control over the United Nations. They also say it is a ploy to get the Taliban to fall in step with US demands, most notably to hand over suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden. Washington blames bin Laden for last year's bombings of its embassies in East Africa, demanding the Taliban hand him over.

"It is not helpful," de Mul said of the ban. Relations between the Taliban and the United Nations have not

been easy. The two have sparred over a variety of issues, ranging from human rights to education for girls and employment for women. But de Mul says he is trying a fresh approach with the Taliban. Rather than an earlier confrontational approach, de Mul says he is trying to negotiate with the Taliban with an eye toward gradual progress.

"The idea is to try to make some programme (instead) of the UN flying into Afghanistan and coming out in an arrogant fashion telling the Taliban 'you should do this and do it quickly'. That was probably not the right way," he said. "I think we should be realistic... we have to establish a dialogue and through that try to make progress while keeping our principles," he said. —AP

Omar says US not behind Kandahar blast

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar Saturday said the United States is not behind the Kandahar blast.

In an interview with the VOA Push-to-service Omar said foreign hand is involved in the Wednesday blast but the United States is not involved in the incident.

A truck loaded with explosive materials exploded near the residence of the Taliban supreme leader Mulla Omar in the southwestern Afghan City of Kandahar killing 10 and injuring 30 others. The truck was parked just three houses away from Omar's home. However, he escaped unhurt.

Omar said investigations into the explosion are continuing. However, no person has so far been arrested. "No one would be spared if found guilty in the blast," he said.

The Taliban supreme leader condemned the incident saying it was a big explosion, which had also caused losses to lives and property.

Taliban officials are investigating how the truck loaded with explosive materials could have reached near Omar's residence, and who was the driver.

Meanwhile a US State Department spokesman condemned the Kandahar blast as alleged act of terrorism and expressed sympathy with the affected people.

"We condemn all acts of terrorism, especially the explosion in Kandahar," the spokesman said, reports VOA.

Afghanistan installs satellite station

Mohammed Sarwar and Chairman Communications Department Mulla Alimullah Habibi.

"They spoke about the importance and role of the communications system at international level and considering the installation of this receiving station as a positive and valuable action in ensuring the communications links in the country," the radio said.

The commissioning of this station was funded by the Ghulam Sadiq Gardezi firm with the efforts and assistance of workers and engineers in order to resolve the communication problems of the people of Afghanistan.

KABUL (Internews) - In another major step towards integrating into the international telecommunications, Afghanistan has installed a satellite receiving station, according to news reports Monday.

"In continuation of the expansion and repair of the communications system in the country, a satellite receiving station has been installed in the centre of Logar province in the south of Kabul and put into operation," according to Radio Shariat.

The report said a meeting was held in the Communications Department of Logar attended by Deputy Governor Logar, Maulvi

Afghan opposition claims capturing key district in north

News 990831

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's northern-based opposition alliance said Monday it captured a strategic district in a northern province from the hardline Taliban Islamic militia after heavy fighting.

The opposition fighters routed the Taliban from Sangcharak district in Sar-i-Pul province Sunday afternoon, Hussain Anwari, an opposition spokesman told The Associated Press by telephone from northern Afghanistan.

The area, roughly 300 kilometres from Kabul, is at the crossroads of northern Jozjan and Sar-i-Pul provinces.

At least 15 Taliban were killed and 65 were taken as prisoners, Anwari said. He gave no details about opposition casualties.

No comment from the Taliban was immediately available.

The fighting is now raging south of Sangcharak, Anwari said. The

opposition forces are only 40 kilometres from the provincial capital of Sar-i-Pul, he added.

The Taliban, who rule 90 percent of Afghanistan, including Kabul, started a major summer-offensive on July 28 and scored early victories. But opposition forces led by Ahmed Shah Masud fought back and drove the Taliban out from most of their newly won territory.

The Taliban, who adhere to a strict version of Islam, are Sunni Muslims and mostly Pashtun — the country's majority ethnic group.

The opposition, comprising religious and ethnic minorities, is battling them on several fronts in northern Afghanistan in a bid to stop the orthodox Islamic militia from capturing the entire country.—AP

Taliban seek UN help to rebuild agriculture sector

News 990903

KABUL: The Taliban Agricultural Minister Abdul Latif Mansoor on Wednesday said it will take millions of dollars to rebuild Afghanistan's shattered agricultural infrastructure ravaged by 20 years of war.

But the international community seems uninterested, he said. "To rebuild the system we need money... We are not getting help from donor countries and the United Nations," he said. In an interview in the beleaguered capital of Kabul.

"Right now we are using money we are collecting through taxes to fix canals. It seems that the United Nations is not taking an interest in Afghanistan," Mansoor also accused the Taliban's opponents, led by former military chief Ahmed Shah Ma-

UN asks Afghan factions not to recruit children for war

News 990825

ISLAMABAD: The UN has called upon the Taliban and opposition forces in Afghanistan to stop recruiting child soldiers to fight in the long-running civil war.

Addressing a press conference here Tuesday, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative for Afghanistan Louis Georges Arsenault said that children as young as 14 were involved in the fighting and some were being sent straight to the frontlines. "There are more fighters being recruited and there are more students under the age of 18, adding 'That's why we are making it an issue much more now'."

Although this is not a new problem, the UN stressed it was particularly concerned at the moment following a massive recruitment drive by the Taliban in the religious schools in neighbouring Pakistan.

It said thousands of students, including many teenagers, had joined the Taliban ranks in recent weeks to take part in the current offensive north of the Afghan capital, Kabul.—PPI

sood. of using irrigation canals as trenches and orchards as camouflage to attack Taliban fighters.

"We heard that opposition is using those canals as trenches and I requested the United Nations to take notice of this... They should not make it a battlefield in which the systems will be destroyed," he said.

The destruction of the irrigation systems and increasing damage to prime agriculture land is the fault of the opposition, he said. In recent weeks heavy fighting has raged between the Taliban religious army and its enemies on the Shomali Plains north of Kabul causing tens of thousands of residents to flee and the destruction of the agricultural infrastructure in the area. "It is not

easy to rebuild this system quickly.

... it is making people's lives miserable," he said. Residents of the area have fled either to Kabul or to the Parjshir Valley, the stronghold of opposition leader Ahmed Shah Massoud.

The United Nations estimates that 70,000 people are living as refugees in the Parjshir Valley in need of food and shelter. According to Mansoor the Taliban have repaired irrigation canals in Helmand and Faryab provinces. "This is on record that the Taliban have tried to rebuild the agricultural system in the country which was destroyed in the decades long war," said Mansoor. "Restoring the agricultural land to production is a priority."—AP

Flow of Afghan refugees steadies but situation desperate

News 990901

The UN has condemned the ruling Taliban regime and its summer offensive which has forced villagers from their traditional land, separated families and destroyed the local infrastructure on the Shamali. One refugee, aged in his 80s, said he was among thousands who were bused from Shamali to the eastern city of Jalalabad, 150 kilometres east of Kabul near the Pakistani border, about a month ago.

"We were thirsty and starving. We were not allowed to take anything from our houses," he said. Asked if conditions were better here, he said: "For us it does not matter. We have no other option. If it was up to us we would have preferred to stay in our villages and enjoy our lives as we did for years through farming," he said.

The Taliban has fought a five-year civil war and controls most of the country. The opposition, led by Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, holds the north east provinces. Militia authorities have justified the destruction on the Shamali, saying opposition troops used canals and vegetation for trench warfare.

French aide group ACTED estimated that 134,000 fled into the Panjshir where "the situation remains very difficult" amid overcrowded river banks, sanitation problems and suspected cholera. — AFP

KABUL: The flow of refugees into Kabul from northern battle zones has steadied but their plight in the capital remained desperate, Taliban and independent sources said Tuesday.

A Taliban spokesman said 8,500 refugees were now being housed in the dilapidated compound of the former Russian embassy with a further 100 to 150 people arriving each day. "Everything is needed. Medicine, bedding, food, clean water, proper toilets and baths," a Taliban spokesman told AFP. Foreign aid sources confirmed the Taliban claims with one western aid worker adding "their numbers are correct and so are their needs".

The situation has been hampered by the United Nations and the World Food Programme which has ceased aid to the compound because the decision was "in line with the UN stated policy of not abetting forced displacement," the sources said.

Up to 200,000 people had fled the fighting along the Shamali Plains north of Kabul. About 140,000 escaped to the opposition held Panjshir Valley while the remainder headed for Kabul. The Shamali begins about 20 kilometres north of Kabul and then stretches a further 100 kilometres to the edge of the Panjshir Valley where opposition forces have heavily fortified themselves.

UN sanctions against Taliban to hit Pakistan hard

News 990901

From Amir Mateen

WASHINGTON: The threat of probable UN sanctions against the Taliban is becoming serious with, to say the least, potentially grave consequences for Pakistan.

Coming at the heels unilaterally imposed US sanctions against Taliban, the move has a fair chance of becoming a reality. Unanimity of sorts seems to be developing at the Security Council with large-scale after-effects for Pakistan, admit Pakistani officials at the UN.

A senior State Department official, when asked by The News on Monday as to what would be the US response if the proposal to impose UN sanctions against the Taliban is tabled at the Security Council, said: "It's a hypothetical question, but our views on the Taliban have been quite clear. We want the Taliban to stop abetting terrorism and extradite Osama Bin Laden from their territory."

US representative at the United Nations, Nancy Solderberg on Saturday categorically expressed her concern over "the continued use of Afghan territory for terrorist activities."

In case the sanctions are imposed,

Pakistan in the wake of what our diplomats call "physical reality" would confront a difficult situation in implementing them. Considering its porous borders, a continuous in and outflow of refugees, an ever-ongoing trade and shared ethnicity, it would be almost impossible for Pakistan to abide by any probable sanctions. This would also be a big jolt to Pakistan's foreign policy, Afghanistan being a dominant determinant, especially in the last decade.

Observers say in case of such an eventuality, Pakistan would come under tremendous pressure. This would give the United States another point of leverage against Pakistan to press it further, particularly on its non-proliferation front agenda. But basically it's all about Osama Bin Laden.

The tacit threat voiced by Inderfurth, at the failure of the Six-Plus Two meeting and over the Taliban's refusal to hand over Osama, is now being put into action. It is more than obvious that the United States is behind the move.

So far, the move is at the level of discussions as no committees have been formed to work out its modalities or decide the extent of sanctions.

This was basically what is called an orientation exercise. At the Security Council, decisions like imposing sanctions or passing a resolution against a country or a political group are discussed behind closed doors. It comes for open discussion only when the Council is not sure about the international response. Observers believe that the debate on Afghanistan was a feeler to test the general mood. If that were the case, the United States might not have been disappointed. It got an overwhelming response against Taliban.

Those directly accusing Pakistan of sponsoring the Taliban were Russia and the Northern Alliance of Afghanistan, which is recognised by the United Nations as the official representative of Afghanistan. Russian Ambassador Genenadi Galilov expressed concern over increasing external interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, especially by Pakistan. India and Iran indirectly blamed Pakistan. Without naming Pakistan they accused "a foreign mentor from across the Southern border" for sponsoring war in Afghanistan. India also alleged that "this country" was making Afghanistan a base for its cross-border terrorist activities.

The UK and the Netherlands confined their censuring to an appeal to Pakistan to use its influence over the Taliban to bring about peace in that war-torn country. China was the only significant country which bailed out Pakistan by proposing an embargo on arms supplies to all the parties concerned. The Chinese contention was that the only way to stop the enhanced infighting in Afghanistan was to stop interference by all countries, as Pakistan was not the only one doing that.

Pakistan's new Ambassador to UN, Inamul Haq, was quick to pick up the proposal. But it is yet to be seen whether this would satisfy the international community, particularly the United States which does not see any solution to the Osama problem in this proposal.

This could also be a big success for India, which has been actively selling its propaganda of painting Pakistan as a sponsor of cross-border terrorism. On this issue, the United States and India are speaking the same language. India now plans to link Kargil with Afghanistan at the coming General Assembly session, where Nawaz Sharif faces the difficult task of defending Pakistan.